

2 Person-by-Situation Perspectives 3 on Close Relationships

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5 Abstract

6 In this chapter, we review theories and research that have adopted interactional (person-by-situation)
7 approaches to the study of relationships. We first discuss interactional thinking within social and
8 personality psychology, highlighting the fundamental ways in which individuals and situations intersect.
9 We then review three major theoretical models that are exemplars of person-by-situation frameworks
10 and have important implications for interpersonal processes: the cognitive-affective processing system
11 (CAPS) model (Mischel & Shoda, 1995), interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and
12 attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). Following this, we explain how and why different
13 person-by-situation approaches have expanded our understanding of individuals within relationships,
14 focusing on romantic relationships. We spotlight programs of research on self-esteem and dependency/
15 risk regulation, promotion versus prevention orientations, and diathesis-stress models based in
16 attachment theory. These lines of inquiry have documented that certain types of situations elicit unique
17 reactions in people who have specific dispositional strengths (e.g., high self-esteem, greater attachment
18 security) or vulnerabilities (e.g., low self-esteem, greater attachment insecurity). Collectively, this
19 research confirms that one cannot predict or understand how individuals think, feel, or behave in
20 relationships without knowing the relational context in which they are embedded. We conclude by
21 identifying new directions in which interactional-based thinking might head, focusing on how functional
22 strategies can further our understanding person-by-situation effects.

23 **Keywords:** person-by-situation models, close relationships, cognitive-affective processing system
24 (CAPS) model, attachment theory, dependency/risk regulation model, interdependence theory

25 Person-by-Situation Perspectives 26 on Close Relationships

27 Every psychological event depends upon the state of
28 the person and at the same time on the environment,
29 although their relative importance is different in
30 different cases.

31 *Kurt Lewin (1936, p. 12)*

32 Kurt Lewin was the founder of several disciplines in
33 psychology, including social and industrial/organizational
34 psychology. He was, however, much more
35 than a founding father. Lewin was a broad-minded
36 visionary who, with the development of field theory
37 (Lewin, 1948), wanted to explain how forces that

reside both within individuals and in their immediate
38 environments motivate people to act in their
39 everyday lives. Thirty years after his famous dictum
40 that behavior cannot be understood unless one
41 considers both who a person is and the environment in
42 which he or she is embedded, psychologists remained
43 embroiled in debates about what explained more
44 variance in social behavior—the dispositions that
45 people have, or the situations in which they find
46 themselves (see Mischel, 1968; Wicker, 1969). The
47 basic answer, of course, was sketched in Lewin's
48 writings decades earlier. The central theme of this
49 chapter echoes one of Lewin's deepest insights: To
50 fully understand *how and why* individuals behave as
51

1 they do, one must discern who they are as people
 2 (e.g., their traits, dispositions, values, attitudes), the
 3 types of situations to which they are responding,
 4 and how these variables sometimes combine (statistically
 5 interact) to influence how individuals think,
 6 feel, and behave.

7 In this chapter, we discuss several theories and
 8 programs of research in the relationship sciences
 9 that have adopted interactional (person-by-situation)
 10 approaches to the study of social behavior. As
 11 we shall see, some excellent examples of how person-
 12 by-situation models can advance our understanding
 13 of how and why people behave the way they do
 14 already exist in the relationships literature. One of
 15 the primary reasons for this is that relationship
 16 partners are often the most salient and important
 17 “feature of the environment” to which individuals
 18 respond in many significant social situations. Most
 19 of our attention, therefore, will focus on person-by-
 20 situation models and effects that pertain to close
 21 relationships.

22 The chapter is divided into four major sections.
 23 In the first section, we briefly overview “interactional”
 24 thinking within social and personality psychology,
 25 highlighting different approaches to the study of
 26 personality and social behavior and discussing how
 27 individuals and situations can intersect (Snyder &
 28 Ickes, 1985). In the second section, we discuss
 29 three major theoretical models that are exemplars
 30 of person-by-situation frameworks and have important
 31 implications for the study of dispositions within
 32 dyadic contexts: the cognitive-affective processing
 33 system (CAPS) model (Mischel & Shoda, 1995),
 34 interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978),
 35 and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).
 36 Each of these theories addresses how certain
 37 personality traits or individual differences are likely
 38 to *combine* with certain situations to jointly predict
 39 how people think, feel, and behave.

40 In the third section, we review how different
 41 person-by-situation approaches have extended our
 42 understanding of individuals within relationships,
 43 placing special emphasis on romantic relationships.
 44 Specifically, we review research on self-esteem and
 45 dependency/risk regulation processes (Murray,
 46 Holmes, & Griffin, 2000) along with recent research
 47 on how promotion and prevention orientations
 48 (Higgins, 1998) operate in different interpersonal
 49 contexts. We then turn to a long-standing program
 50 of research by Simpson, Rholes, and their colleagues
 51 that has tested a series of diathesis-stress predictions
 52 associated with attachment theory. Each of these
 53 programs of research has confirmed that certain

types of situations elicit certain kinds of responses in
 people who possess certain dispositional strengths
 (e.g., high self-esteem, greater attachment security)
 or vulnerabilities (e.g., low self-esteem, greater
 attachment insecurity). Collectively, these programs
 of research indicate that one can neither predict nor
 understand how individuals think, feel, and behave
 without knowing the specific social situations that
 individuals are confronting and how they perceive
 and interpret each situation. We conclude the chapter
 by suggesting new directions in which interactional-
 based thinking might head, accentuating the promise
 of functional strategies for furthering our understand-
 ing person-by-situation effects (Snyder & Cantor,
 1998).

Interactional Perspectives in Psychology

Social and personality psychology have rather distinct
 historical origins (Jones, 1985), partly because each
 field began with different missions and goals. Social
 psychology started as an enterprise that sought to
 understand how factors external to individuals affect
 the way in which they think, feel, and behave. Gordon
 Allport (1968, p. 3), for example, defined social
 psychology as the “attempt to understand and explain
 how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals
 are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied
 presence of others.” Personality psychology, on the
 other hand, wanted to determine how forces that
 reside *within* individuals guide their behavior over
 time and in different situations. Being both a social
 and a personality psychologist, Allport (1937, p. 48)
 also offered a foundational definition of personality,
 referring to it as “the dynamic organization within
 the individual of those psychophysical systems that
 determine his [*sic*] unique adjustments to his
 environment.”

One feature that these two definitions share is what
 Lewin (1948) addressed in field theory—the principle
 forces that impel people to *move* through the life
 space. Social and personality psychology both address
 how and why individuals are motivated to think, feel,
 and behave in response to forces, with personality
 psychology placing emphasis on forces that reside
 within individuals (e.g., traits, needs, motives,
 desires), and with social psychology focusing on
 forces that lie outside a person but within their
 local environment (e.g., social norms and roles,
 situational presses and expectations, other people).
 However, Lewin also believed that personality traits
 should affect what people attend to, perceive,
 interpret, remember, and react to in different
 social situations. Personality, in other words, should

1 often play a role in determining the meaning and
 2 potential impact that certain situations have on
 3 individuals who possess certain traits or disposi-
 4 tions. This is why Lewin developed and used manip-
 5 ulation checks in studies; he understood that persons
 6 and situations were inextricably connected in more
 7 profound ways than many people assumed. Today,
 8 the premise that behavior is the result of character-
 9 istics of both the person and the situation is almost
 10 universally accepted (see Snyder & Cantor, 1998;
 11 Snyder & Ickes, 1985). This is especially true in the
 12 field of interpersonal relationships, where relation-
 13 ship partners are often the most prominent and
 14 important “feature” in the environments of most
 15 individuals. Moreover, the effects of some personal-
 16 ity traits (e.g., agreeableness) are not witnessed unless
 17 individuals are in situational contexts that are rele-
 18 vant to the expression of their traits (e.g., those that
 19 allow agreeable people to cooperate with others).

20 Historically, three major strategies have been
 21 used to investigate how personality and social situa-
 22 tions dovetail to guide how individuals think, feel,
 23 and behave: the dispositional strategy, the interac-
 24 tional strategy, and the situational strategy (Snyder
 25 & Ickes, 1985). The oldest strategy, the disposi-
 26 tional one, reveals how specific traits or dispositions
 27 impact how individuals think, feel, and behave both
 28 over time and in different social settings. This strat-
 29 egy was used in early research on trait constructs
 30 such as the authoritarian personality (Adorno,
 31 Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), the
 32 need for social approval (Crowne & Marlowe,
 33 1960), and Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis,
 34 1970). One cardinal feature of the dispositional
 35 strategy is that it identifies individuals who regularly
 36 and consistently display certain social behaviors that
 37 presumably reflect the influence of the trait(s) being
 38 studied (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Although the dis-
 39 positional approach has generated many interesting
 40 and important findings (see Snyder & Ickes, 1985),
 41 it has distinct limitations. For example, the disposi-
 42 tional strategy tends to be atheoretical and, in some
 43 cases, tautological (e.g., evidence for possessing the
 44 trait of extraversion is sometimes inferred from the
 45 fact that certain people talk more than others). It
 46 also focuses heavily on whether and how certain dis-
 47 positions impact how people think, feel, and behave
 48 to the relative neglect of important situational fac-
 49 tors. For this reason, studies based solely on the dis-
 50 positional strategy tend to explain relatively little
 51 variance in most social behaviors.

52 Realizing that most dispositional constructs,
 53 including virtually all personality traits (Mischel,

1968) and attitudes (Wicker, 1969), account for 54
 approximately 10% of the variance in most behav- 55
 iors, psychologists returned to Lewin and began 56
 using what is now known as the interactional strat- 57
 egy. In addition to Lewin’s seminal writings, the 58
 seeds of the interactional strategy were evident in 59
 other early lines of work, including Murray’s (1938) 60
 model of needs and motives, Kelly’s (1955) theory 61
 of personal constructs, and Neisser’s (1967) cogni- 62
 tive research, which inspired the motivated cogni- 63
 tion movement (Endler, 1982). Consistent with 64
 Lewin, each of these theorists claimed that disposi- 65
 tions should influence how people perceive and 66
 interpret the meaning of certain social situations, 67
 depending on their current needs and motivational 68
 states. This explains why the interactional strategy 69
 considers both dispositional *and* situational infor- 70
 mation when specifying when and why certain traits 71
 should or should not be moderated by (statistically 72
 interact with) certain types of situations, resulting 73
 in consistent and predictable *context-dependent* 74
 patterns of thought, feeling, and action. 75

76 Within the past two decades, a hybrid discipline 76
 of personality and social psychology has emerged in 77
 several subareas of both fields. For example, interac- 78
 tional strategies have been successfully applied to 79
 the study of prosocial behavior (e.g., Carlo, 80
 Eisenberg, Troyer, Switzer, & Speer, 1991); domi- 81
 nance, conformity, and dissent within groups (e.g., 82
 Maslach, Santee, & Wade, 1987); stress reactions 83
 (e.g., Davis & Matthews, 1996); intrinsic and 84
 extrinsic motivation (e.g., Thompson, Chaiken, & 85
 Hazelwood, 1993); alcohol use (e.g., Hull & Young, 86
 1983); self-concept and social behavior (e.g., Brown 87
 & Smart, 1991); resistance to persuasion (e.g., 88
 Zuwerink & Devine, 1996); obedience to authority 89
 figures (e.g., Blass, 1991); perceptions of social sup- 90
 port (e.g., Lakey, McCabe, Fiscaro, & Drew, 1996); 91
 and intimacy and self-disclosure (e.g., Shaffer, 92
 Ogden, & Wu, 1987). When dispositions and situ- 93
 ations are both properly measured and modeled, up 94
 to 80% of the variance in behavior can be explained 95
 (Snyder & Cantor, 1998). 96

97 There are different types of moderating variables 97
 in the interactional strategy, two of which are par- 98
 ticularly relevant to this chapter: (1) strong versus 99
 weak situations, and (2) precipitating versus non- 100
 precipitating situations. *Strong situations* have clear 101
 and distinct norms, rules, or expectations that spec- 102
 ify how individuals should behave in the situation 103
 (e.g., appropriate behavior at funerals, or when the 104
 national anthem is being played). These highly role- 105
 governed situations reduce the influence that most 106

1 dispositions have on behavior, suppressing the
 2 effects of individual difference variables. *Weak situa-*
 3 *tions*, in contrast, involve fewer rules, norms, or
 4 expectations regarding how one ought to behave in
 5 the situation (e.g., a party at a friend's house, an
 6 initial encounter with a stranger in a waiting room).
 7 As a consequence, weak situations allow disposi-
 8 tions to exert greater influence on behavior because
 9 situational forces are ambiguous or largely absent.
 10 Person-by-situation interaction effects are, therefore,
 11 more likely to emerge when a disposition is relevant
 12 to the situation being investigated and when the
 13 situation is neither too strong nor too weak.

14 The second major moderating variable in the
 15 interactional strategy is whether situations are pre-
 16 cipitating or nonprecipitating. *Precipitating situa-*
 17 *tions* shift the cause of a behavior to a particular
 18 disposition, which then alters, amplifies, or mutes
 19 how an individual responds to it. For example, cer-
 20 tain classes of situations (e.g., a rowdy party) may
 21 lead certain individuals (e.g., extraverts) to act on
 22 their schemas (working models) associated with
 23 extraversion, leading them to think, feel, and behave
 24 in a more boisterous and lively manner. Precipitating
 25 situations, which are also known as “situational
 26 moderating variables,” operate when: (1) features of
 27 the situation are theoretically relevant to the dispo-
 28 sition; (2) the situation makes the schema(s) under-
 29 lying the disposition salient guides to behavior; and
 30 (3) the situation is not too strong and permits dif-
 31 ferent types or degrees of responding, depending on
 32 whether an individual scores high, moderate, or low
 33 on the disposition.

34 The third major investigative approach is the
 35 situational strategy (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). This
 36 strategy attempts to explain consistencies and regu-
 37 larities in social behavior by examining how people
 38 with different dispositional tendencies select, alter,
 39 or manipulate the social situations that affect their
 40 daily lives. The situational strategy is actually a
 41 dynamic version of the interactional strategy, but
 42 one that considers the reciprocal nature of situations
 43 and dispositions (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Thus, this
 44 strategy addresses not only how situations affect dis-
 45 positions, but how dispositions shape the micro and
 46 macro environments in which people live. Within
 47 the study of relationships, the situational strategy
 48 has confirmed that individual differences associated
 49 with self-monitoring affect how high and low self-
 50 monitors choose friends as activity partners (Snyder,
 51 Gangestad, & Simpson, 1983) and evaluate pro-
 52 spective romantic partners (Snyder, Berscheid, &
 53 Glick, 1985). Other research has demonstrated that

certain personality traits systematically affect the
 choice of long-term mates (Buss, 1984), which in
 turn affect long-term relationship outcomes (Caspi
 & Herbener, 1990).

Major Interactional Theories

Given the compelling logic of interactional
 approaches, one might expect they would be found
 in many domains across psychology. While they
 have informed the study of several important topics
 in psychology (see above), interactional strategies
 are not as prevalent as one might anticipate. There
 are several reasons for this. To begin with, a consid-
 erable amount of research in social and personality
 psychology has not been grounded in broad theo-
 retical frameworks that specify how and why certain
 situations should have *precipitating* effects on cer-
 tain people. This problem has been compounded by
 the fact that, unlike personality traits, we still do not
 have a good taxonomy or understanding of the fun-
 damental types of social situations that regularly
 influence individuals and their lives (for an impor-
 tant exception, see Kelley et al., 2003; see also Reis
 & Holmes, chapter 4, this volume). Fortunately,
 some major relationship-based theories have incor-
 porated both person and situation variables, making
 the relationships field an exemplar of how the inter-
 actional approach can be applied to generate novel
 and important insights into person-by-situation
 effects. This has been facilitated by recent advances
 in data analytic methods (see Kenny, Kashy, &
 Cook, 2006), which now allow researchers to design
 and test person-by-situation models much more
 easily than before. For example, the development of
 new repeated-measures techniques for diary studies
 now permits researchers to follow individuals across
 time as they (and potentially their partners) move
 through a range of different situations (e.g., Bolger
 & Romero-Canyas, 2007).

In this section, we highlight three major theo-
 ries. We first discuss Mischel and Shoda's (1995)
 CAPS model of dispositions in relation to situa-
 tions. This general model is one of the most promi-
 nent and best exemplars of how person-by-situation
 approaches can be fruitfully adopted to expand our
 understanding of when, how, and why certain situa-
 tions reveal patterning and consistency in social
 behavior among certain people. We then turn to
 two other major theories, both of which have deep
 interpersonal roots: interdependence theory
 (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978)
 and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).
 These theories offer more specific predictions about

1 how certain dispositions should interface with cer- 53
 2 tain types of situations to generate unique patterns 54
 3 of thought, feeling, and action. As we shall see, rela- 55
 4 tionship partners are very important and salient fea- 56
 5 tures of the individual’s “social environment” 57
 6 according to these theories. This, in turn, introduces 58
 7 some interesting complications in that: (1) each 59
 8 partner’s dispositions (e.g., traits, motives, needs, 60
 9 desires) become an important element of the other 61
 10 partner’s immediate situation/environment; (2) the 62
 11 dispositions of *both* partners must be taken into 63
 12 consideration; and (3) the *beliefs* that individuals 64
 13 have about their partner’s needs and dispositions 65
 14 may determine what happens, independent of 66
 15 whether or not these beliefs reflect the partner’s 67
 16 actual needs or dispositions. 68

17 *The Cognitive-Affective Processing* 18 *System (CAPS) Model*

19 Traditional personality approaches have been based 69
 20 on the assumption that people’s dispositional char- 70
 21 acteristics remain stable across different situations 71
 22 and contexts. Research, however, has not always 72
 23 supported this assumption. People’s behavior in 73
 24 relation to nearly all traits varies considerably across 74
 25 contexts and situations (Mischel, 1968). To deter- 75
 26 mine whether individual differences in behaviors 76
 27 are generated by transitory situational factors or by 77
 28 people’s enduring personality characteristics, 78
 29 researchers often statistically average trait-related 79
 30 behaviors across many situations. This averaging 80
 31 process reveals the extent to which people differ in 81
 32 their overall level of trait-related behavior, but it 82
 33 does not allow for situation-specific predictions, 83
 34 that is, for predictions that address when, where, 84
 35 and why patterns of behavior differ (Mischel, Shoda, 85
 36 & Mendoza-Denton, 2002). An average summary 86
 37 score for a person’s level of agreeableness, for exam- 87
 38 ple, might reveal that a highly agreeable person is 88
 39 more accommodating than other people across dif- 89
 40 ferent contexts (e.g., when negotiating a business 90
 41 deal with a client, when negotiating vacation plans 91
 42 with his/her spouse). However, it does not identify 92
 43 important exceptions to this person’s global action 93
 44 tendencies, such as situations in which he/she 94
 45 responds in less obliging or more confrontational 95
 46 ways (e.g., during specific types of conflict with a 96
 47 romantic partner, during difficult negotiations with 97
 48 specific people). 98

49 To generate predictions that move beyond under- 99
 50 standing overall average differences in behavior, 100
 51 Mischel and Shoda (1995) proposed the cognitive- 101
 52 affective processing system (CAPS) model (see also 102

Mendoza-Denton & Ayduk, chapter 18, this 53
 volume). Instead of treating situational variability as 54
 noise that conceals the true stability and consistency 55
 of personality across situations, the CAPS model 56
 assumes that intraindividual variability of behavior 57
 across situations and different contexts may reflect 58
 an enduring yet dynamic personality system, one 59
 that incorporates rather than ignores the impact of 60
 situations (see also Cervone, 2004). 61

The CAPS model focuses on situations as 62
 they are perceived and understood by individuals 63
 (cf. Kelly, 1955), and it attempts explain *why* situa- 64
 tions exert different effects on different people. 65
 The model proposes that people have mental repre- 66
 sentations, or cognitive-affective units (CAUs), 67
 that exist within a large network of associations and 68
 constraints known as CAPS networks. CAUs form 69
 the stable units of personality and contain people’s 70
 construals, goals, expectations, beliefs, and emo- 71
 tions with respect to situations, others, and the self. 72
 They also contain self-regulatory standards, compe- 73
 tencies, plans, and strategies (Mischel & Shoda, 74
 1995). Once activated (or inhibited), CAUs guide 75
 how people interpret or construe an encountered 76
 situation or person, and they automatically activate 77
 cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses 78
 to that situation or person. Each individual has a 79
 relatively stable activation network among the 80
 units within the system, reflecting his/her social 81
 (e.g., early caregiving experiences, culture) and 82
 biological (e.g., temperament, genes) history and 83
 background. 84

One key assumption of the CAPS model is that 85
 mental representations have conditional qualities— 86
 “*if . . . then properties*,” such as *if* I encounter 87
 X . . . *then* I will do Y. According to Mischel (1999), 88
 every person has a unique *if . . . then . . .* profile, 89
 which constitutes his/her *behavioral signature*. 90
 Empirical evidence supports this premise. Shoda, 91
 Mischel, and Wright (1994), for example, observed 92
 children’s behavior in various naturalistic situations 93
 and found that children’s *if . . . then . . .* profiles were 94
 distinct and stable across time. Moreover, Chen 95
 (2003) has shown that the more familiar individuals 96
 are with someone, the more others are thought of in 97
 conditional terms. People also think conditionally 98
 about themselves. If a person identifies a situation 99
 that is linked to one of his/her behaviors in an 100
 “*if . . . then . . .*” manner, the behavior is more likely 101
 to occur. For example, a highly anxious person who 102
 perceives his/her partner’s fishing trip with friends 103
 as abandonment or neglect is more likely to display 104
 clingy or angry behaviors. 105

1 The CAPS model, therefore, suggests a recon-
 2 ceptualization of personality traits as specific
 3 *if . . . then . . .* behavioral profiles, which specify
 4 what a given individual will do in specific situations.
 5 According to the model, individual differences can
 6 emerge in two ways. First, people differ in the acces-
 7 sibility of their schemas and the situational cues that
 8 activate their schemas. In a given situation, different
 9 schemas should become activated for different
 10 people, leading them to perceive different aspects of
 11 the same situation or to interpret the same situation
 12 in different ways. For example, a partner's "ambigu-
 13 ous" comment about one's appearance before a
 14 formal event might be construed as rejection by one
 15 individual, but as a neutral comment by another
 16 individual. Different schemas can also become acti-
 17 vated for different individuals when meeting a par-
 18 ticular person. For instance, when individuals
 19 encounter new people who resemble significant
 20 others from the past that activate schemas of them,
 21 these schemas tend to evoke *if . . . then . . .* profiles
 22 that lead individuals to respond to new people as
 23 they would with prior significant others (e.g., par-
 24 ents; Andersen & Chen, 2002). Second, the pattern
 25 of linkages and strength of associations between
 26 situations and behaviors that have been established
 27 over time should differ from one person to another.
 28 Even if two people share the same view of a given
 29 situation (e.g., interpreting a partner's ambiguous
 30 remark as rejection), their *behavioral* responses
 31 might differ considerably. One person, for instance,
 32 might respond with anger or hostility, whereas the
 33 other might react with silence or withdrawal. To
 34 predict behavior, therefore, researchers must deter-
 35 mine: (1) how a person construes the situation
 36 (which is influenced by his/her schemas and their
 37 degree of accessibility), and (2) the person's specific
 38 situation-behavior linkage (i.e., his/her *if . . . then*
 39 *. . .* profile) (Shoda et al., 1994).

40 In general, the CAPS model emphasizes regu-
 41 larities in within-person cognitive, emotional, and
 42 behavioral responses in particular contexts. The
 43 assumption that different cognitive-affective repre-
 44 sentations can be activated in different situations
 45 allows for the existence of seemingly contradictory
 46 traits in the same person (Fleeson, 2001, 2004). For
 47 example, fearful-avoidant individuals (who have
 48 negative views of themselves and others) might dis-
 49 play dismissive behavioral tendencies in one situa-
 50 tion, but anxious-ambivalent qualities (e.g., clingy
 51 behavior or neediness) in another situation. In addi-
 52 tion, identifying certain *if . . . then . . .* profiles allows
 53 researchers to capture important exceptions to

54 people's global behavioral tendencies and to pin- 54
 55 point which situations typically elicit or inhibit 55
 56 trait-relevant behaviors. For example, given their 56
 57 negative expectations regarding the responsiveness 57
 58 of others, people who score high on attachment 58
 59 avoidance should be reluctant to enter certain social 59
 60 situations. Consistent with the CAPS perspective, 60
 61 Beck and Clark (2009) have found that avoidant 61
 62 persons tend to sidestep social situations that pro- 62
 63 vide information about others' evaluations of them 63
 64 (i.e., socially diagnostic situations), but enjoy social- 64
 65 izing with others in *nondiagnostic* social situations 65
 66 that do not provide information about whether 66
 67 others like them. In addition, Zaki, Bolger, and 67
 68 Ochsner (2008) have documented that trait affect- 68
 69 ive empathy (individuals' tendency to experience 69
 70 others' emotions) predicts empathic accuracy (indi- 70
 71 viduals' tendency to accurately assess others' emo- 71
 72 tions), but only in certain interpersonal situations 72
 73 (when others express these emotions clearly). 73

74 Given that each partner constitutes a significant 74
 75 part of the other person's immediate situation or 75
 76 environment in most close relationships, the CAPS 76
 77 model can also be applied to dyadic contexts. To the 77
 78 extent that a person's "situation" consists largely of 78
 79 his/her partner's behavior, the interpretation and 79
 80 psychological experience of the situation (i.e., the 80
 81 partner's behavior) should be influenced by the 81
 82 individual's CAPS network, which in turn should 82
 83 influence his/her behavioral response to the partner. 83
 84 The partner then interprets and experiences this 84
 85 response through his/her own CAPS network, from 85
 86 which another behavioral response flows. The 86
 87 behavior of an individual, therefore, emerges from 87
 88 the *interaction* between the individual and his/her 88
 89 situation, which consists primarily of the behavior 89
 90 displayed by his/her partner. 90

91 Zayas, Shoda, and Ayduk (2002) have adapted 91
 92 Lewin's famous equation to close relationship con- 92
 93 texts. The behavior of one partner (B_1) emerges 93
 94 from the interaction between his/her dispositional 94
 95 characteristics (P_1) and the situational input (i.e., 95
 96 his/her partner's behavior, B_2), such that $B_1 = f(P_1,$ 96
 97 $B_2)$. The behavior of the second partner can be con- 97
 98 ceptualized similarly: $B_2 = f(P_2, B_1)$. Hence, if an 98
 99 individual's immediate environment consists mainly 99
 100 of his/her partner's behavior, E_1 becomes a function 100
 101 of the individual's own behavior (B_1) and his/her 101
 102 partner's characteristics (P_2). The partner then inter- 102
 103 prets and responds (B_2) to the individual's initial 103
 104 behavior, so that $E_1 = f(P_2, B_1)$ and $E_2 = f(P_1, B_2)$. 104
 105 As partners interact across time, the "interlocking" 105
 106 of their respective CAPS systems should create a 106

1 dyadic system, within which the dispositional char-
 2 acteristics of each individual are embedded and
 3 from which each individual's behaviors, as well as
 4 the unique behavioral patterns of the dyad, gradu-
 5 ally emerge (Zayas et al., 2002). As partners interact
 6 more often and spend more time together, attention
 7 to and encoding of the partner's behavior increases.
 8 For this reason, the situational input for one's own
 9 behavior increases in psychological significance over
 10 time, leading to stable and predictable *interaction*
 11 *signatures* of relationships. If, for instance, an indi-
 12 vidual's partner consistently criticizes him/her for
 13 having a drink with dinner, this might repeatedly
 14 activate a specific subset of the individual's CAPS
 15 network ("If I have a drink . . . then X criticizes me),
 16 triggering a particular response such as defensiveness.
 17 Over time, the thoughts and emotions in the
 18 individual's CAPS network related to this particular
 19 situation will become more accessible, and the
 20 behavior (defensiveness) might be triggered by min-
 21 imal input on part of the partner (e.g., even a
 22 "glance" by the partner when one has a drink elicits
 23 defensiveness).

24 People's dispositional characteristics also predis-
 25 pose them to select, evoke, or manipulate certain
 26 situations (Buss, 1987), including the partner and
 27 his/her behavior. This, in turn, may amplify or sus-
 28 tain these dispositional characteristics. For example,
 29 if an individual's behavior is consistent over time
 30 (e.g., s/he always withdraws during relationship
 31 conflicts), the individual's *partner* will be repeatedly
 32 exposed to situations that activate the same thoughts
 33 and emotions within his/her relevant CAUs (e.g.,
 34 "if there is conflict, then he/she pulls away and we
 35 grow apart"). This, in turn, should generate specific
 36 behavioral responses in the partner (e.g., approach
 37 behavior to try to reestablish intimacy). This behav-
 38 ioral response may then serve as a situational trigger
 39 for the other person, who is likely to experience his/
 40 her partner's approach behavior as threatening,
 41 resulting in even more withdrawal, thereby perpetu-
 42 ating or exacerbating the cycle. Because the patterns
 43 and associations among cognitions and affects
 44 within CAPS networks also reflect the impact of
 45 individuals' social and genetic backgrounds, the
 46 CAPS model is consistent with interpersonal theo-
 47 ries such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973,
 48 1980) and interdependence theory (Kelley &
 49 Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

50 In sum, the CAPS model is a broad person-
 51 by-situation framework that explains how situations
 52 may interact with personality traits or individual
 53 differences to improve our ability to predict and

54 understand certain trait-behavior linkages. According
 55 to the CAPS model, personality reflects stable pat-
 56 terns of behavior that result from certain trait-situa-
 57 tion pairings and are activated in certain situations.
 58 One limitation of the CAPS model is that it does
 59 not explain why, from an ontogenetic standpoint,
 60 certain situations should come to trigger certain
 61 patterns of thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in cer-
 62 tain people. Other theories are needed to explain
 63 when, how, and why certain situations should
 64 elicit the cardinal personality signatures of people
 65 who have certain traits. This is where major inter-
 66 personal theories such as interdependence theory
 67 and attachment theory make important contribu-
 68 tions to our understanding of person-by-situation
 69 effects.

Interdependence Theory 70

71 Interdependence theory, which was developed by
 72 two of Lewin's students (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959;
 73 Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), is one of the major theo-
 74 ries within social psychology that directly addresses
 75 how people and their environments interact, result-
 76 ing in specific behavioral decisions. According to
 77 interdependence theory, when two people decide
 78 what to do in a given situation, their choices should
 79 depend on: (1) the type of situation the partners are
 80 in, and (2) each partner's needs, motives, and/or dis-
 81 positions in relation to the other. The specific type
 82 of situation that two people find themselves in
 83 should affect how they are dependent on each other
 84 and how they can thus influence each other's out-
 85 comes in the situation (i.e., their degree of *interdepen-*
 86 *dependence*). The interpersonal dispositions/orientations
 87 of each partner (e.g., each partner's interpersonally
 88 relevant traits, motives, values, attitudes, and beliefs)
 89 should also guide how each partner perceives, inter-
 90 prets, and makes decisions about what to do in the
 91 situation. In other words, the dispositions of *each*
 92 partner should be "functionally relevant" to how
 93 each partner thinks, feels, and acts, depending on
 94 the features of the situation at hand (Holmes,
 95 2002).

96 One of the main obstacles to studying persons
 97 and situations has been identifying the fundamental
 98 dimensions on which social situations differ (see
 99 also Reis & Holmes, chapter 4, this volume). In
 100 fact, one of the primary limitations of Mischel and
 101 Shoda's (1995) CAPS model is that it does not pro-
 102 vide a "theory of situations" capable of specifying
 103 *why* certain personality traits are activated by expo-
 104 sure to certain situations (Holmes, 2002). On the
 105 person side, we have a fairly good taxonomy of the

1 major personality traits (e.g., the Big Five) and sev-
 2 eral basic interpersonal orientations (e.g., attach-
 3 ment styles, self-esteem). On the situation side,
 4 however, a solid taxonomy of situations remains
 5 elusive, partly because there are a multitude of pos-
 6 sible situations that differ on myriad dimensions.
 7 Kelley et al. (2003) have recently used interdepen-
 8 dence theory to identify approximately 20 “proto-
 9 typical situations” that have unique outcome
 10 patterns and distinct qualities. Some of these proto-
 11 typical situations (e.g., those involving principles of
 12 exchange, investment, threat, trust) should be sys-
 13 tematically associated with important relationship
 14 processes and outcomes, and they are encountered
 15 on a regular basis.

16 Figure 20.1 depicts one common relationship-
 17 relevant situation known as “exchange with mutual
 18 profit” (see Holmes, 2002). The values in each cell
 19 reflect each person’s (each partner’s) level of satisfac-
 20 tion or dissatisfaction with each behavioral choice,
 21 with each partner having two options from which
 22 to choose. In the hypothetical example shown in
 23 Figure 20.1, if both partners select option 1 (both
 24 decide to clean the house), each partner benefits by
 25 10 points because the house gets cleaned while the
 26 couple enjoys spending time together. This coopera-
 27 tive choice entails a reciprocal exchange in which
 28 each partner shares equally in the largest total ben-
 29 efits in any of the four cells (i.e., the partners share
 30 20 points). One or both partners may, however, be
 31 drawn to option 2 (not cleaning the house), which
 32 would yield 5 additional points (15) if the other
 33 partner chooses option 1 (cleans the house by him-
 34 self/herself) and, in doing so, receives no benefits
 35 (or perceives costs if s/he feels treated unfairly). This
 36 “exchange” situation pits motives to cooperate
 37 against motivates to maximize personal gains, and it

is one of a handful of fundamental relationship-
 relevant situations (see Kelley et al., 2003, for other
 situations).

Each of the 20 fundamental situations identified
 by Kelley et al. (2003) varies on six situation dimen-
 sions (Holmes, 2002). As shown in Table 20.1, the
 first situation dimension is the *degree of interdepen-*
dence, which is indexed by the extent to which each
 partner can influence the quality (goodness) of his
 or her partner’s outcomes in the situation. The
 greater the potential for influence, the more interde-
 pendent partners are in that situation. Relationships
 in which partners are more interdependent over
 many different situations tend to be closer because
 partners have stronger and more frequent impact on
 each other across different life domains (Kelley
 et al., 1983). The second dimension is the *mutuality*
of dependence, which reflects the degree to which
 partners have equal versus unequal power over each
 other in the situation. Greater mutuality of depen-
 dence reflects more equal power in the situation,
 whereas less mutuality signifies more unequal power.
 The third dimension, *correspondence of outcomes*,
 represents the extent to which each partner has
 similar versus conflicting initial interests in the situ-
 ation before any negotiation occurs. More corre-
 spondent situations are easier to resolve because the
 initial behavioral choice that is best for one partner
 is also likely to be best for the other partner, with
 little if any need for compromise. The fourth dimen-
 sion, the *basis of control*, reflects the degree to which
 partners can control each other’s outcomes in the
 situation by using exchange principles (e.g., by
 making promises or threats) or coordinating their
 activities (e.g., when one partner begins dinner, and
 the other performs the next logical steps). The fifth
 dimension, the *temporal structure* of decision-mak-
 ing, reflects how soon decisions will have conse-
 quences for one or both partners once a decision has
 been made. Some decisions have immediate conse-
 quences (e.g., deciding to have life-altering surgery),
 whereas the full effects of others take years to unfold
 (e.g., deciding to have children). The sixth dimen-
 sion, the *degree of uncertainty*, represents the extent
 to which partners are uncertain about the long-term
 outcomes of a decision due to incomplete informa-
 tion or lack of knowledge. In more uncertain situa-
 tions, for example, partners cannot predict whether
 their current decisions will or will not result in the
 outcomes they anticipated or hoped for.

Each of the six situation dimensions listed in Table
 20.1 has a “function of rule,” and each one is relevant
 to a particular set of interpersonal dispositions.

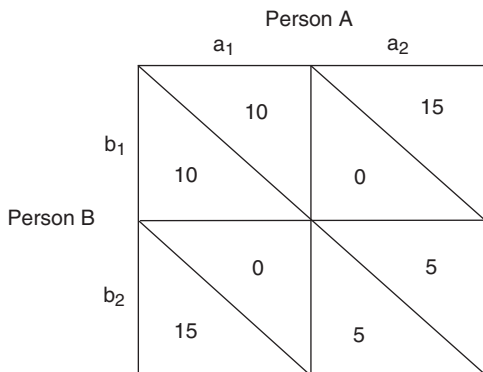


Fig. 20.1 Mutual exchange with profit situation (reprinted with permission from Holmes, 2002)

Table 20.1 Dimensions of Situations and Interpersonal Dispositions (reprinted with permission from Holmes, 2002)

Dimension of Situation	Function of Rule	Interpersonal Disposition
1. Degree of interdependence	Increase or decrease dependence	Avoidance of interdependence/
2. Mutuality of interdependence	on partner	Comfort with dependence
3. Correspondence of outcomes	Promote prosocial or self-interested goals	Cooperative/competitive Responsive/unresponsive
	Expectations about partner's goals	Anxiety about responsiveness/ Confidence or trust
4. Basis of control	Control through Exchange (promise/threat) or Coordination (initiative/follow)	Dominant/submissive Assertive/passive
5. Temporal structure	Promote immediate or distant goal striving	Dependable/unreliable Loyal/uncommitted
6. Degree of uncertainty	Cope with incomplete information or uncertain future	Need for certainty/openness Optimism/pessimism

1 For example, in situations that differ in the degree
2 of interdependence, the functional (i.e., operative)
3 decision rule is whether to increase or decrease
4 dependence on the partner in the situation. Which
5 decision is made should depend on the degree to
6 which one or both partners are dispositionally
7 inclined to avoid interdependence (as is true of
8 avoidantly attached people) or to embrace it (as
9 is true of securely attached people). In situations that
10 differ in mutuality of interdependence, the func-
11 tional rule is to promote either prosocial goals or
12 self-interested goals. Which decision is made should
13 depend on the degree to which one or both partners
14 have a cooperative versus competitive orientation or
15 a responsive versus unresponsive orientation toward
16 other people, especially the partner. In situations
17 that differ in correspondence of outcomes, the func-
18 tional rule centers on expectations of the partner's
19 goals or what the partner wants to achieve. Thus,
20 decisions should hinge on the degree to which indi-
21 viduals are concerned about whether their partners
22 are sufficiently responsive to them and/or how much
23 confidence or trust they can place in their partners.
24 In situations that differ in the basis of control, the
25 functional rule involves whether control of the part-
26 ner's outcomes occurs through exchange or coordi-
27 nation tactics. Which decision is made should
28 depend on the degree to which one or both partners
29 are dominant versus submissive or assertive versus
30 passive. In situations that differ in temporal struc-
31 ture, the functional rule is to facilitate either imme-
32 diate or distant goal-striving. The decision followed

should hinge on the degree to which one or both 33
partners are dependable versus unreliable or loyal 34
versus uncommitted to each other. Finally, in situa- 35
tions that vary in degree of uncertainty, the 36
functional rule is how to deal with incomplete 37
information or unknown future events. The deci- 38
sion that is made should depend on the degree to 39
which one or both partners has a high need for cer- 40
tainty, is open to new experiences, or is optimistic 41
about future events. 42

In sum, for each of the six situation dimensions, 43
specific interpersonal dispositions, including inter- 44
personally relevant personality traits and relation- 45
ship orientations, should become salient and guide 46
how people construe certain situations and how 47
they make decisions when in them. Put another 48
way, situations differ in the extent to which they are 49
“relevant” to certain dispositions and are likely to 50
elicit their expression (Holmes, 2002). People who 51
prefer autonomy and emotional independence in 52
relationships, for instance, should dislike or feel 53
uncomfortable in situations that pull for greater 54
interdependence. Such situations should activate 55
the relationship-relevant schemas and working 56
models of these individuals, which should in turn 57
motivate them to behave in ways that *decrease* their 58
dependence on their partners, especially in situa- 59
tions that might foster greater interdependence. 60
Preferences for autonomy and emotional independ- 61
ence, however, should not become activated 62
and guide thoughts, feelings, and behavior in other 63
situations. 64

1 *Attachment Theory*

2 Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) began formulating
3 attachment theory after observing the deleterious
4 effects that long-term caregiver/child separations
5 had on the emotional and physical well-being of
6 children. He conjectured that the need to form
7 attachment bonds with primary caregivers is an
8 innate, biologically based tendency that was selected
9 during evolutionary history because it increased the
10 probability of surviving the many perils of child-
11 hood. Indeed, the tendency to seek physical and
12 psychological proximity to attachment figures (e.g.,
13 primary caregivers, romantic partners) is one of the
14 central tenets of attachment theory. According to
15 Bowlby (1969, 1973), virtually all children and
16 adults are motivated to seek some form of contact
17 with their attachment figures, especially when they
18 are distressed, threatened, or feel overwhelmed
19 (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994).

20 The earliest attachment research focused on rela-
21 tionships between young children and their moth-
22 ers. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978)
23 identified three types of infant/caregiver rela-
24 tionships: secure, avoidant, and anxious-resistant. When
25 upset, children who have a secure relationship with
26 their mothers glean comfort from her presence and
27 actively use her to regulate and reduce negative
28 affect when it arises. Avoidant children, by com-
29 parison, do not express their needs for proximity to
30 their mothers by directly seeking contact when they
31 become distressed. Rather, avoidant children turn
32 away from their mothers to regulate and dissipate
33 negative affect and utilize other coping strategies
34 (e.g., distraction). Avoidant behavior may be an
35 evolved strategy to suppress emotions, needs, or
36 actions that are unwanted, dysfunctional, or were
37 associated with painful rejections from past attach-
38 ment figures. It also allows children (and perhaps
39 adults) to not put excessive demands on their attach-
40 ment figures, who may be unwilling or unable to
41 invest more in the relationship and might otherwise
42 terminate it (Main, 1981).

43 Children who have anxious-resistant attachment
44 relationships also do not use their mothers as a
45 source of comfort when they are distressed. Instead
46 of avoiding their caregivers, however, anxious chil-
47 dren cling to their mothers, remain distressed even
48 after establishing contact with them, and do not
49 resume normal activities such as exploration. These
50 behaviors suggest that anxious children are hyper-
51 sensitive to separations from their caregivers, despite
52 the fact that they do not seem to receive sufficient
53 “felt security” from them. Anxious behavior could

reflect an evolved strategy designed to express emo- 54
tions, needs, or actions intensely in order to attract 55
and retain the attention of inconsistent, poorly 56
motivated, or inattentive caregivers (Main, 1981). 57

As individuals grow and develop, relationship 58
experiences become encoded in working models 59
(schemas), which explain much of the continuity 60
and stability witnessed in personality and social 61
behavior across development (Bowlby, 1973). 62
Working models are cognitive structures that 63
encompass an individual’s cumulative experiences 64
in and perceptions of earlier attachment rela- 65
tionships (Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2004). 66
They contain episodic, semantic, and affective infor- 67
mation about prior relationships and interpersonal 68
events including: (1) rules about the emotions and 69
thoughts one has about relationship partners; (2) 70
guidelines for how to interpret and regulate emo- 71
tional experiences in relationships; (3) beliefs and 72
values about relationships and relationship-based 73
experiences; (4) expectations about what future 74
relationships and relationship experiences ought to 75
be like; and (5) memories and emotions linked to 76
past relationships. Working models guide behavior 77
and affective experiences in relationships, and they 78
provide a cognitive/emotional context through 79
which new relationship information is filtered, 80
interpreted, and usually assimilated. 81

Conceptually analogous attachment patterns 82
and corresponding behaviors have also been docu- 83
mented in adults (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007a; 84
also chapter 19, this volume). In adults, attachment 85
patterns (known as “attachment styles”) exist within 86
a 2-dimensional space defined by the continuously 87
distributed, relatively orthogonal dimensions of 88
attachment anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, 89
& Shaver, 1998; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 90
1996). Within this framework, greater attachment 91
security is indicated by lower scores on both the 92
anxiety and avoidance dimensions. Individuals who 93
score high on attachment anxiety worry about losing 94
their partners, yearn to achieve greater felt security, 95
and are hypervigilant to signs that their partners 96
could be pulling away from them (Mikulincer & 97
Shaver, 2003). Those who score high on attachment 98
avoidance worry about losing their independence 99
and autonomy, yearn to maintain control in their 100
relationships, and use deactivating strategies when 101
dealing with threatening events. As Kobak and 102
Sceery (1988) have discussed, highly secure persons 103
openly acknowledge distress when it arises and turn 104
to significant others for comfort and emotional sup- 105
port to dissipate negative affect. Highly avoidant 106

1 people are less inclined to acknowledge distress and
 2 prefer to manage negative affect by defensively with-
 3 drawing from others. Highly anxious individuals
 4 focus on their distress, ruminate about worst-case sce-
 5 narios, and are hypervigilant to cues that their attach-
 6 ment figures might abandon them. Mikulincer and
 7 Shaver (2003) have translated these ideas into a pro-
 8 cess model that explains how certain types of threat-
 9 ening events activate the working models and coping
 10 strategies associated with each attachment style.

11 One of the most central and unique principles of
 12 attachment theory is that the attachment system
 13 should reestablish felt security when individuals,
 14 either children or adults, feel threatened or distressed
 15 (Bowlby, 1973; Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Felt inse-
 16 curity is a state of strong, unpleasant arousal in
 17 which individuals are upset and need comfort or
 18 support, preferably from their attachment figures
 19 (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Bowlby (1969, 1988)
 20 believed that the attachment system should be most
 21 strongly activated when individuals are distressed
 22 (for experimental evidence, see Mikulincer, Gillath,
 23 & Shaver, 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, chapter 19,
 24 this volume). The primary activating conditions can
 25 be partitioned into personal factors (e.g., hunger,
 26 pain, fatigue, or illness), environmental factors (e.g.,
 27 frightening, dangerous, or overly challenging events),
 28 and relationship factors (e.g., relationship conflict,
 29 the prolonged absence of the attachment figure, dis-
 30 couragement of proximity by the attachment figure).
 31 Each of these threatening events has the potential to
 32 activate components of the attachment system, such
 33 as heightening the accessibility of working models
 34 and evoking specific behaviors designed to mitigate
 35 distress and negative affect (Simpson & Rholes,
 36 1994). Thus, the most prototypic emotional and
 37 behavioral features of secure, anxious, and avoidant
 38 people should be observed when they are in specific
 39 situations that trigger their working models, which
 40 contain their most important attachment-relevant
 41 concerns, worries, and goals. Highly anxious people,
 42 for example, should be most likely to display hyper-
 43 vigilance (e.g., closely monitoring the whereabouts
 44 of their partners, constantly ruminating about
 45 “worst-case” scenarios involving their partners or
 46 relationships) in situations that call into question the
 47 commitment of their partners or make the instabil-
 48 ity of their relationships salient. Unless these situa-
 49 tions pose extreme or clear threats to relationships
 50 (Simpson & Rholes, 1994), they should not activate
 51 the working models of secure or avoidant people,
 52 neither of whom worries about relationship loss or
 53 abandonment.

In summary, attachment theory is a person-by- 54
 situation theoretical framework (Bowlby, 1973; 55
 Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Simpson & Rholes, 56
 1994). It suggests that the prototypical features of 57
 attachment security, avoidance, and anxiety should 58
 be most apparent when highly secure, avoidant, or 59
 anxious individuals are in situations that activate 60
 their working models. Their working models should 61
 then guide what secure, avoidant, and anxious per- 62
 sons do and do not attend to in the situation and 63
 how they process and interpret social information 64
 within it en route to deciding how to behave. We 65
 will present several empirical examples of specific 66
 person-by-situation attachment effects in the next 67
 section of the chapter. 68

Interactional Programs of Research in 69 Relationship Science 70

In this section, we provide a selective yet representa- 71
 tive review of key empirical findings in the field of 72
 close relationships, all of which have been informed 73
 by person-by-situation (interactional) models. We 74
 highlight a few sustained programs of research that 75
 have investigated how stable individual differences 76
 (e.g., self-esteem, personality traits, attachment 77
 styles) interact with certain situations (e.g., different 78
 types of threatening versus nonthreatening situa- 79
 tions) to generate specific outcomes hypothesized 80
 by major theoretical models. Research that does not 81
 contain each of these features is not reviewed. 82

We begin by describing a series of studies that 83
 have tested predictions derived from the depen- 84
 dency/risk regulation model (Murray et al., 2000; 85
 Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). The majority of 86
 these studies have examined how individuals with 87
 high versus low self-esteem react to certain kinds of 88
 threats and challenges posed to their romantic part- 89
 ners/relationships. Following this, we discuss recent 90
 work extending core tenets of regulatory focus 91
 theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) to relationships. We 92
 then turn to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 93
 1973, 1980), showcasing a program of research that 94
 has examined how and why individuals who are 95
 anxiously, avoidantly, or securely attached think, 96
 feel, and behave toward their romantic partners 97
 when faced with different types of stressors. 98

Dependency/Risk Regulation 99 and Self-Esteem 100

Several studies have illustrated the value of using 101
 person-by-situation approaches to increase our 102
 understanding of important interpersonal dynam- 103
 ics. The long-standing program of work by Murray, 104

1 Holmes, and their colleagues on self-esteem and
2 dependency/risk regulation (Murray et al., 2000;
3 Murray et al., 2006), for example, has shown how
4 situating personality processes *within* a dyadic con-
5 text can elucidate the mechanisms that tie certain
6 dispositions to important relationship functioning
7 and outcomes.

8 Low self-esteem is a psychological vulnerability,
9 placing these individuals at risk for a variety of neg-
10 ative outcomes such as loneliness, life dissatisfac-
11 tion, depression, and hopelessness (Crocker &
12 Wolfe, 2001; Cutrona, 1982). In close relation-
13 ships, individuals with chronically low self-esteem
14 tend to perceive their partners less positively than
15 high self-esteem individuals (Murray, Holmes, &
16 Griffin, 1996a), and their perceptions often become
17 more negative over time (Murray, Holmes, &
18 Griffin, 1996b). In addition, low self-esteem indi-
19 viduals tend to be involved in less satisfying marital
20 (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993) and dating relation-
21 ships (Murray et al., 1996a).

22 Murray, Holmes, and their colleagues have devel-
23 oped a model that elucidates *why* low self-esteem
24 frequently results in less satisfying relationships.
25 According to their dependency/risk regulation
26 model, individuals who differ on self-esteem inter-
27 pret situations that involve interpersonal vulnerabil-
28 ity and dependency very differently. Compared to
29 high self-esteem individuals, those with low self-
30 esteem have less positive and more uncertain views
31 of themselves (Baumeister, 1993; Campbell, 1990).
32 Moreover, they tend to believe that their partner's
33 positive regard for and acceptance of them is condi-
34 tional—that is, it is contingent on certain attributes
35 or conditions (e.g., “I will love you if you . . .”;
36 Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996). High self-esteem people,
37 in contrast, assume that their partner's regard and
38 acceptance is largely unconditional.

39 According to Murray et al. (2000), people use
40 these different self-views to construe how their part-
41 ners view them. Low self-esteem individuals often
42 assume that their partners see them just as negatively
43 as they see themselves, whereas high self-esteem
44 people presume that their partners see the positive
45 qualities in them that they believe they actually pos-
46 sess. These different reflected appraisals should
47 become more pronounced in situations that signal
48 possible rejection, make one feel vulnerable, or
49 engender self-doubt. Murray, Holmes, MacDonald,
50 and Ellsworth (1998), for example, made people
51 doubt their intellectual abilities experimentally.
52 Individuals low in self-esteem responded to this sit-
53 uation with increased worries about their partner's

54 positive regard and acceptance. But when self-doubts
55 were induced in high self-esteem individuals, they
56 perceived their partner's regard and acceptance were
57 even *stronger*, reflecting their sustained belief in the
58 unconditional nature of their partner's regard.
59 Moreover, in daily diary studies, low self-esteem
60 individuals are more likely to interpret ambiguous
61 signs such as their partner's bad mood on a given
62 day as evidence that they are not positively regarded
63 by their partner (Murray et al., 2006). These find-
64 ings are consistent with Mischel and Shoda's (1995)
65 CAPS model, which suggests that different schemas
66 get activated for different people in certain situa-
67 tions, leading individuals to focus on different
68 aspects of the same situation or to interpret the same
69 situation differently.

70 Murray et al. (2000) also suggest that reflected
71 appraisals of the partner's regard should be experi-
72 enced as a sense of felt security. Although most
73 people regulate closeness and dependence in newly
74 formed relationships in a self-protective manner
75 (i.e., they delay commitment or avoid risking vul-
76 nerability until they are fairly sure their partners will
77 reciprocate regard and affection; Bowlby, 1980;
78 Kelley, 1983), regulation processes should take dif-
79 ferent courses for people who differ in self-esteem.
80 Low self-esteem individuals should feel less secure
81 about their partner's regard as the relationship devel-
82 ops (Murray et al., 2000). As a result, they may
83 unwittingly limit the development of stronger emo-
84 tional bonds by viewing their partners and relation-
85 ships more negatively in the service of proactively
86 protecting themselves from potential hurt or rejec-
87 tion (Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, & Kusche,
88 2002). High self-esteem individuals, on the other
89 hand, should feel more secure about their partner's
90 regard, which should permit them to use the rela-
91 tionship as a source of further self-affirmation. Thus,
92 consistent with the CAPS model, individuals with
93 high versus low self-esteem should display different
94 patterns of linkages between situations and behav-
95 iors, predisposing them to think, feel, and behave in
96 different ways, especially when they are in situations
97 that make them feel vulnerable.

98 The partner's regard can be construed as an
99 “affordance” on which high self-esteem individuals
100 capitalize. The belief that their partners view them
101 as positively as they view themselves should help
102 high self-esteem people feel self-affirmed and even
103 more secure about their partner's unconditional
104 regard. This, in turn, should have important impli-
105 cations for how high self-esteem individuals interact
106 with their partners. For example, they should (and

1 do) perceive their partners more positively, behave
 2 more constructively, and thus experience greater
 3 relationship well-being over time (Murray et al.,
 4 2000). Low self-esteem persons should be less likely
 5 to detect potential affordances. In fact, their often
 6 incorrect belief that their partners perceive them
 7 negatively leads low self-esteem people to devalue
 8 their relationships, behave in destructive ways (e.g.,
 9 seek excessive reassurance, act needy), and distance
 10 themselves psychologically from their partners to
 11 avert the rejection they anticipate (Murray et al.,
 12 2006). In so doing, low self-esteem people create
 13 the unfortunate reality that they fear.

14 In conclusion, the dependency/risk regulation
 15 model is an excellent example of how theory and
 16 research relevant to a major individual difference
 17 variable—self-esteem—can be fruitfully used to
 18 generate and test novel predictions about how cer-
 19 tain people should react to situations that pose
 20 threats to the self or the current relationship. The
 21 predictions and findings that flow from this impor-
 22 tant line of research are consistent with the CAPS
 23 model.

24 *Regulatory Focus and Close Relationships*

25 Building on earlier distinctions between the needs
 26 for nurturance and security (e.g., Bowlby, 1969),
 27 regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; 1998) iden-
 28 tifies two motivational systems: (1) promotion
 29 focus, which facilitates the fulfillment of people's
 30 nurturance needs through the pursuit of hopes and
 31 aspirations and is concerned with personal growth
 32 and advancement, and (2) prevention focus, which
 33 allows people to achieve security needs through the
 34 fulfillment of duties and obligations and is con-
 35 cerned with safety and protection. When pursuing
 36 promotion concerns, people are in a state of eager-
 37 ness. They strive toward the presence of rewarding
 38 outcomes (i.e., gains), and seek to avert the absence
 39 positive outcomes (i.e., nongains, or missed oppor-
 40 tunities and unrealized aspirations). When they
 41 are prevention-focused, people use vigilance strate-
 42 gies to avert the presence of negative outcomes (i.e.,
 43 losses) and strive toward the absence of negative
 44 outcomes (i.e., nonlosses, or absence of threats).
 45 Both regulatory focus systems exist in all people to
 46 some degree. A particular regulatory focus can be
 47 activated momentarily by situations that convey
 48 gain/reward-related information or loss/threat-
 49 related information (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman,
 50 1998). Stable individual differences in regulatory
 51 focus are believed to develop, at least in part, from
 52 socialization experiences with significant others,

especially parenting practices that encourage 53
 promotion or prevention concerns (Higgins & 54
 Silberman, 1998; Manian, Papadakis, Strauman, & 55
 Essex, 2006). 56

A large literature has documented the cognitive, 57
 affective, and behavioral manifestations of regula- 58
 tory focus, both when measured as chronic dis- 59
 positions and when activated temporarily in 60
 experiments (see Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008). 61
 Consistent with their concerns for growth and 62
 advancement, strongly promotion-focused people 63
 are more likely to attend to and recall events that 64
 signal the presence or absence of positive outcomes 65
 (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Higgins 66
 & Tykocinski, 1992). Such people also experience 67
 positive outcomes more intensely and with more 68
 cheerfulness, and they experience negative outcomes 69
 less intensely and with greater dejection (Idson, 70
 Liberman, & Higgins, 2000). Consistent with their 71
 concerns for safety and security, strongly preven- 72
 tion-focused people are more likely to attend to and 73
 recall events involving the presence and absence of 74
 negative outcomes (Higgins et al., 1994; Higgins & 75
 Tykocinski, 1992). Moreover, they experience nega- 76
 tive outcomes more intensely and with more agita- 77
 tion, and positive outcomes less intensely and with 78
 greater quiescence-related emotions (Idson et al., 79
 2000). 80

It is important to emphasize that both regulatory 81
 foci are concerned with attaining positive end-states 82
 (i.e., prevention focus with security/safety, and pro- 83
 motion focus with growth/nurturance). In addition, 84
 both promotion-focused and prevention-focused 85
 people approach positive outcomes or avoid nega- 86
 tive ones to reach these desired end-states (Higgins, 87
 1997). Promotion and prevention orientations, 88
 therefore, are not identical to the approach system 89
 (which is concerned exclusively with approaching 90
 positive outcomes) and the avoidance system (which 91
 is concerned exclusively with avoiding negative out- 92
 comes; see Gable, 2006, and Gable & Berkman, 93
 2008). Rather, regulatory focus theory specifies dif- 94
 ferent ways in which promotion-focused and pre- 95
 vention-focused people typically approach and 96
 experience positive outcomes and avoid and experi- 97
 ence negative outcomes. Thus, both regulatory focus 98
 systems should affect perceptual sensitivities, emo- 99
 tional reactivity, and behavioral responses to posi- 100
 tive *and* negative relational events. People's salient 101
 needs for growth or security in relationships should 102
 prompt them to perceive and respond to social 103
 events in ways that help them meet their specific 104
 relationship-relevant goals and needs. In so doing, 105

1 promotion focus and prevention focus should shape
 2 relationship outcomes in different ways. In a rela-
 3 tionship context, for example, strongly promotion-
 4 focused people might strive to keep the relationship
 5 lively and growth-oriented (e.g., through surprises,
 6 stimulating conversations, suggesting novel activi-
 7 ties) and guard against boredom or lack of rela-
 8 tionship growth. Highly prevention-focused people,
 9 who harbor strong needs for security, might avoid
 10 behaviors or situations that could escalate conflict
 11 or produce declines in intimacy.

12 Researchers have just begun to examine the con-
 13 sequences of regulatory focus in interpersonal con-
 14 texts, most notably within groups (Levine, Higgins,
 15 & Choi, 2000) and between groups (Sassenberg,
 16 Kessler, & Mummendey, 2003; Shah, Brazy, &
 17 Higgins, 2004). Moving into personal relationships,
 18 Camacho, Higgins, and Luger (2003) have docu-
 19 mented that regulatory focus predicts how people
 20 evaluate recalled conflict resolutions with their par-
 21 ents. Shah (2003) has found that the degree to
 22 which individuals believe their fathers have a par-
 23 ticular regulatory focus regarding a task that they
 24 are about to perform in the lab (i.e., the extent to
 25 which they believe that their father hopes they will
 26 pursue the task goal versus considers it their duty/
 27 obligation to do so) implicitly affects the regulatory
 28 focus they adopt while doing the lab task as well as
 29 their emotional response to manipulated perfor-
 30 mance feedback. Examining consequences of regu-
 31 latory focus in romantic relationships, Ayduk, May,
 32 Downey, and Higgins (2003) showed that having
 33 strong prevention concerns influences the evaluative
 34 and behavioral tactics that highly rejection-sensitive
 35 people use when coping with rejection. Individuals
 36 who were both highly rejection-sensitive and highly
 37 prevention-focused evaluated a potential dating
 38 partner less positively when they believed that the
 39 partner had rejected them. These individuals also
 40 reported greater withdrawal hostility during and
 41 after conflicts (e.g., acting cold and distant), and
 42 less expressive hostility (e.g., yelling) during con-
 43 flicts with their romantic partners. Winterheld and
 44 Simpson (2010) found that individuals who are
 45 more prevention-focused perceived more unsup-
 46 portive (distancing) behaviors from their partners
 47 during a conflict resolution discussion with their
 48 partners. They also tried to resolve the conflict by
 49 focusing more narrowly on the circumstances that
 50 contributed to it rather than on ways to move
 51 beyond the conflict. More promotion-focused indi-
 52 viduals, in contrast, perceived more supportive
 53 behaviors from their partners during the conflict

discussion and displayed more creative problem- 54
 solving when trying to settle the conflict. Suggesting 55
 that promotion and prevention concerns vary in 56
 importance across relationship stages, Molden, 57
 Lucas, Finkel, Kumashiro, and Rusbult (2009) 58
 found that perceived support for promotion-focused 59
 goals (but not prevention-focused goals) independ- 60
 ently predicted personal and relationship well- 61
 being in unmarried partners (i.e., during relationship 62
 stages when needs for growth and advancement 63
 tend to dominate). Among married couples, how- 64
 ever, perceived support for both types of goals pre- 65
 dicted well-being, suggesting that in more established 66
 relationships needs for security and growth are both 67
 important. 68

69 Regulatory focus theory is also a generative frame-
 70 work from which to view individual differences and
 71 person-by-situation interactions at the level of the
 72 dyad. Because the situations that individuals encoun-
 73 ter in many relationship contexts might be largely
 74 defined by who their romantic partner is and what s/
 75 he does, the regulatory focus of an individual's *part-*
 76 *ner* ought to also predict how an individual thinks,
 77 feels, or behaves. Winterheld (2008), for example,
 78 had couples engage in supportive discussions during
 79 which partners took turns disclosing an issue of per-
 80 sonal importance to them. Individuals provided
 81 more positive and less negative (e.g., less intrusive)
 82 support to partners who were more promotion-
 83 focused. In contrast, individuals provided more
 84 negative and less positive support to more preven-
 85 tion-focused partners. Thus, people's regulatory
 86 focus orientations affect not only their own experi-
 87 ences, but their partner's experiences as well.

88 In sum, regulatory focus theory is another prom-
 89 ising theoretical framework for understanding pro-
 90 cesses and outcomes in relationship contexts. The
 91 theory specifies the antecedent conditions that
 92 should activate each regulatory system, and it antic-
 93 ipates the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral
 94 responses that ought to flow from each system. In so
 95 doing, the theory allows researchers to investigate
 96 individual differences in people's cognitive, emo-
 97 tional, and behavioral responses that are consistent
 98 across social interactions with different interaction
 99 partners. A regulatory focus approach may also
 100 enable researchers to identify relationship-relevant
 101 situations or the psychological features of such situ-
 102 ations (e.g., specific partner behaviors) to which
 103 people respond in specific, regulatory-goal congru-
 104 ent ways that minimize negative outcomes (non-
 105 gains or losses) or maximize positive outcomes
 106 (gains or nonlosses).

1 *Diathesis-Stress and Attachment Styles*

2 According to attachment theory, specific types of
3 situations should activate certain working models,
4 depending on an individual's attachment history.
5 Bowlby (1973, 1988) hypothesized that diathesis-
6 stress effects should emerge in certain stressful inter-
7 personal contexts, with greater attachment insecurity
8 often acting as the diathesis (the personal vulnera-
9 bility) and with stress being indexed by how an
10 individual responds to a potentially taxing situation
11 (e.g., feeling afraid, ill, or fatigued, experiencing
12 relationship conflict) or a difficult life event (e.g.,
13 having a baby, experiencing a major relationship
14 breakup or loss). Greater attachment security, on
15 the other hand, should buffer people from all but
16 the most extreme of stressful events (Mikulincer &
17 Florian, 1998). Securely attached people have posi-
18 tive and benevolent working models of themselves
19 and others, and they typically utilize constructive,
20 problem-focused coping strategies when they
21 become distressed. These assets should serve as an
22 "inner resource" (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007b; also
23 chapter 19, this volume), permitting highly secure
24 people to take advantage of the attributes and
25 resources that other people—especially their attach-
26 ment figures—are able and willing to offer.

27 How an individual reacts to a specific life stressor
28 should depend on his or her relationship history,
29 which presumably has shaped his/her working
30 models. As discussed earlier, highly anxious indi-
31 viduals have received inconsistent or unpredictable
32 care from past attachment figures, especially when
33 they were upset and needed comforting (Cassidy &
34 Berlin, 1994). Given these experiences, anxious
35 individuals worry about losing their attachment fig-
36 ures in adulthood, crave more felt security, and are
37 vigilant to detecting even trivial signs that their part-
38 ners might be pulling away from them (Mikulincer
39 & Shaver, 2003). They should, therefore, be both-
40 ered by—and their working models should become
41 activated in—situations that threaten or call into
42 question the quality, stability, or permanence of
43 their primary relationships. Accordingly, stressful
44 situations that center on relationship issues (e.g.,
45 unresolved relationship conflicts, the long-term
46 absence of partners, discouragement of closeness by
47 partners) should elicit the *relational signatures*—the
48 prototypical emotional, cognitive, and behavioral
49 tendencies—that define attachment anxiety.

50 Highly avoidant individuals have been rejected
51 and rebuffed by prior attachment figures, especially
52 when they were distressed and needed support
53 (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). As a consequence,

they have learned to be independent and self-reliant, 54
which explains why they strive to retain autonomy 55
and control in relationships. One way to achieve 56
these goals is to avoid or exit situations that might 57
require engaging in activities that could undermine 58
their independence, autonomy, or control in rela- 59
tionships. Giving or receiving emotional forms of 60
care and support ought to be one such situation 61
(Bowlby, 1973). Highly avoidant people, therefore, 62
should be particularly bothered by—and their 63
working models should be activated in—situations 64
that involve giving or receiving support, being emo- 65
tionally intimate, or having to express personal 66
emotions. These types of situations, in other words, 67
should elicit the prototypical emotional, cognitive, 68
and behavioral features that are the hallmarks of 69
avoidant attachment. 70

Highly secure individuals have received good, 71
consistent, and predictable care from past attach- 72
ment figures, especially when they were upset 73
(Bowlby, 1973). During adulthood, therefore, 74
secure individuals do not worry about relationship 75
loss or their partners wanting to become emotion- 76
ally closer to them. To the contrary, secure people 77
want to develop greater closeness and intimacy with 78
their partners (Mikulincer, 1998), which is facili- 79
tated by their use of constructive, problem-focused 80
coping strategies. When most chronic or acute stres- 81
sors are encountered, the benevolent working 82
models of secure people should become activated 83
(Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007b). Unlike their inse- 84
cure counterparts, secure people should turn to 85
their attachment figures openly and directly in order 86
to solve their problems, quell their negative emo- 87
tions, and move forward with their plans and goals. 88

During the past two decades, several studies have 89
documented theoretically meaningful attachment 90
style by situation effects (for reviews, see Mikulincer 91
& Shaver, 2003, 2007a; chapter 19, this volume). 92
Some of the most programmatic work on this topic 93
has been conducted by Simpson, Rholes, and their 94
colleagues, who have spent 20 years testing attach- 95
ment diathesis-stress effects in situations that, 96
according to attachment theory, activate the work- 97
ing models of secure, anxious, or avoidant people. 98
This body of work has focused on the unique role 99
that different sources of stress assume in eliciting the 100
quintessential features—the relational signatures— 101
of attachment security, anxiety, and avoidance. 102

The first study in this program of research 103
explored how adult romantic attachment styles 104
moderate support-giving and support-seeking in 105
romantic couples when one partner is waiting to 106

engage in an “anxiety-provoking” task. Simpson, Rholes, and Nelligan (1992) unobtrusively videotaped dating couples while the female partner was waiting to do an activity that, she was told, made most people feel anxious. While she waited to do the stressful task (which never occurred), her male partner waited with her, believing that he was going to do a different, nonstressful activity. After the study, observers rated how distressed and how much support each female partner sought and how much support her male partner offered. Securely and avoidantly attached partners differed considerably in the amount of support they sought or gave, depending on how distressed the female partner was during the waiting period. If women were less distressed, they sought less support from their male partners, regardless of their attachment styles. If, however, women were more securely attached, they sought more support if they were more distressed, but less support if they were less distressed. Conversely, avoidant women sought *less* support if they were more distressed and more support if they were less distressed. Securely attached men provided more support if their partners were more distressed (regardless of the woman’s attachment style), whereas avoidant men offered less support, especially when their partners were more distressed. Similar effects have been documented when the support-giving and support-receiving roles are reversed (i.e., when men wait to do a stressful task with their nonstressed female partners; Simpson, Rholes, Oriña, & Grich, 2002). Thus, corroborating specific person-by-situation predictions derived from attachment theory, highly avoidant people are not poorer support-seekers and support-providers in general; rather, they are deficient only when they or their partners are upset and support-seeking or giving is clearly required. Similarly, highly secure people do not always seek or provide greater support; they do so primarily when they or their partners are distressed and direct emotional support truly needs to be sought or provided.

The second study in this line of research examined how relationship-based sources of stress affect the display of different conflict resolution tactics, depending on each partner’s attachment style. Simpson, Rholes, and Phillips (1996) randomly assigned dating couples to discuss either a major or a minor unresolved problem in their relationship. Each couple was then videotaped as the partners tried to resolve the problem as best they could. The discussions were then coded by observers. Consistent with attachment theory, more anxiously attached

individuals reacted less positively toward their partners, but only when they were trying to resolve a *major* problem that posed a more serious threat to their relationship. For example, highly anxious individuals who discussed a major problem displayed greater distress and more discomfort during their discussions, and they reported feeling more anger and hostility toward their partners. At the end of their discussions, they perceived their partners and relationships less positively in terms of the amount of love, commitment, mutual respect, openness, and supportiveness in the relationship. Highly anxious women who discussed a major problem had discussions that were rated as lower in quality. Thus, consistent with specific person-by-situation predictions gleaned from attachment theory, highly anxious people do not think, feel, or behave in a less functional manner in all conflict situations; they do so mainly in stressful situations that call into question the permanence, stability, or quality of their close relationships. Less anxious (i.e., more secure) individuals, by comparison, respond in a more functional manner, particularly when dealing with major relationship conflicts.

We have also investigated how attachment to one’s parents (measured by the Adult Attachment Interview; AAI) is related to the types of caregiving that “work best” in calming secure, anxious, and avoidant people when they are upset. Simpson, Winterheld, Rholes, and Oriña (2007) had both partners in romantic relationships complete the AAI. One week later, each couple was videotaped trying to resolve the most important current problem in their relationship. After the study, observers rated each discussion for the degree to which: (1) emotional, instrumental, and physical caregiving behaviors were displayed; (2) care recipients appeared calmed by their partner’s caregiving attempts; and (3) each partner appeared distressed during the discussion. Individuals who had more secure representations of their parents were rated as more calmed if their partners gave them emotional care, especially if they were distressed during the discussion. Conversely, individuals who had more avoidant representations of their parents were more calmed by instrumental caregiving behaviors from their partners, especially if they were distressed. Thus, as anticipated by attachment theory, securely attached people benefit more from emotional forms of support (which they most likely received earlier in life), but chiefly when they are distressed. Avoidant people, in contrast, benefit more from instrumental support (which they probably received

1 to some degree during childhood), but principally
 2 when they are upset. This indicates that avoidant
 3 people do benefit from certain forms of support, par-
 4 ticularly those that may not threaten their sense of
 5 independence and autonomy. When secure and
 6 avoidant individuals are less distressed, however, they
 7 are both receptive to alternate forms of caregiving.

8 What are highly anxious people thinking and
 9 feeling in relationship-threatening situations that
 10 might explain why their relationships tend to be so
 11 turbulent and unstable? To address this question,
 12 Simpson, Ickes, and Grich (1999) had dating cou-
 13 ples try to infer what their partners were thinking
 14 and feeling (from a videotape of their interaction) as
 15 both partners rated and discussed slides of attractive
 16 opposite-sex people who ostensibly were interested
 17 in meeting and dating new people on campus. This
 18 task was designed to be a relationship-threatening
 19 one, particularly for highly anxious people. In this
 20 relationship-threatening context, highly anxious
 21 individuals were better at inferring the relationship-
 22 threatening thoughts and feelings that their partners
 23 were actually having about the attractive opposite-
 24 sex stimulus persons during the rating and evalua-
 25 tion task. Highly anxious people, in other words,
 26 got more directly “into the heads” of their partners
 27 in this situation, showing signs of cognitive hyper-
 28 vigilance. Less anxious (more secure) persons, how-
 29 ever, were less empathically accurate in this situation.
 30 If they were more empathically accurate, highly
 31 anxious individuals also perceived that their rela-
 32 tionships were less stable and they felt more threat-
 33 ened and distressed during the rating and discussion
 34 task. They also reported sharp declines in feelings of
 35 closeness to their partners following the task. And
 36 highly anxious individuals who more accurately
 37 inferred their partner’s threatening thoughts and
 38 feelings were more likely to have broken up with
 39 their partners 4 months later. In sum, this study
 40 confirms that highly anxious people “get into the
 41 heads” of their partners and accurately infer the
 42 relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings that
 43 their partners are having precisely when what they
 44 value the most—their relationships—could be in
 45 jeopardy. Highly anxious people are not more
 46 empathically accurate than other people in general;
 47 they are more accurate mainly in situations that
 48 threaten their relationships.

49 Most recently, we have investigated how people
 50 with different attachment styles remember their
 51 own behavior during attachment-relevant discus-
 52 sions with their romantic partners. Simpson, Rholes,
 53 and Winterheld (2010) had couples engage in two

videotaped discussions of major, unresolved con- 54
 flicts in their relationship. Immediately after the 55
 discussions, each partner reported how supportive 56
 and emotional distant s/he had been in the discus- 57
 sions. One week later, each partner returned to the 58
 lab and was asked to recall how supportive and 59
 emotionally distant s/he had been one week earlier. 60
 Highly avoidant individuals remembered being less 61
 supportive one week later, but only if they were dis- 62
 tressed during the original discussions. Highly anx- 63
 ious individuals remembered being less emotionally 64
 distant, but only if they were distressed during the 65
 discussions. These memory biases are consistent 66
 with the cardinal needs and goals of highly avoidant 67
 and highly anxious people. Avoidant people want to 68
 limit intimacy and maintain control and autonomy 69
 in their relationships, so they remember themselves 70
 as being less supportive, particularly during difficult 71
 conversations with their partners. Anxious people, 72
 in contrast, desire greater felt security, so they 73
 remember themselves as being less emotionally dis- 74
 tant (emotionally closer), particularly if their con- 75
 versations were difficult. 76

77 Our program of research has also investigated
 78 how attachment styles are associated with reactions
 79 to chronically stressful life events. One such event is
 80 the transition to parenthood. Accordingly, we exam-
 81 ined how the experience of having a first baby
 82 impacts the marital satisfaction of partners who
 83 have different attachment styles (Rholes, Simpson,
 84 Campbell, & Grich, 2001). Consistent with predic-
 85 tions, if highly anxious women enter the transition
 86 to parenthood perceiving less support from their
 87 husbands, they experience significant declines in
 88 marital satisfaction across the first 6–7 months of
 89 the transition. If, however, they enter parenthood
 90 perceiving greater spousal support, they do not
 91 report declines. Mediation analyses indicated that
 92 highly anxious women who enter the transition
 93 period perceiving less spousal support experience
 94 larger drops in perceived spousal support from the
 95 prenatal period to 6 months postpartum, which in
 96 turn predicts larger pre-to-postpartum declines in
 97 their marital satisfaction. Attachment avoidance
 98 was not related to marital changes, which is under-
 99 standable given that avoidant people place less
 100 importance on the quality of their relationships.

101 Bowlby (1988) hypothesized that anxiously
 102 attached mothers who enter the transition to par-
 103 enthood harboring doubts about the supportiveness
 104 of their partners should also experience postpartum
 105 increases in depressive symptoms. He reasoned that
 106 the perception of insufficient partner support should

1 be tied to deeper and more pervasive concerns about
 2 possible relationship loss, especially among highly
 3 anxious people. If, however, highly anxious mothers
 4 enter the transition feeling well supported by their
 5 partners, they should be buffered from experiencing
 6 depressive symptoms. Bowlby (1988) also conjectured
 7 that the connection between (1) higher anxiety
 8 in combination with more doubts about the
 9 partner's supportiveness and (2) increases in depression
 10 should be mediated by (3) the degree to which
 11 these new mothers perceive declines in partner
 12 support during the first few months postpartum.
 13 Simpson, Rholes, Campbell, Tran, and Wilson
 14 (2003) found each of these effects in anxiously
 15 attached first-time mothers.

16 Our program of work has also tested how people
 17 with different attachment styles respond to less
 18 taxing yet still stressful daily events in their relationships.
 19 Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, and Kashy
 20 (2005) had both partners in dating relationships
 21 complete daily diaries for 14 consecutive days. After
 22 the diary period, each couple was videotaped trying
 23 to resolve the most contentious unresolved problem
 24 that arose during the diary period. Highly anxious
 25 individuals perceived greater daily conflict in their
 26 relationships, significantly more than their partners
 27 did. They also reported that daily conflicts were
 28 more detrimental to the future of their relationships.
 29 Moreover, on days when they perceived
 30 greater relationship-based conflict, highly anxious
 31 individuals believed that their partners had a more
 32 negative outlook on their relationship and its future,
 33 a view that typically was *not* shared by their partners.
 34 When partners discussed the most serious conflict
 35 in the lab after the diary phase, highly anxious
 36 individuals both reported and were rated as being
 37 more distressed, *regardless* of how positively their
 38 partners behave toward them (rated by observers)
 39 during their discussion. Less anxious (more secure)
 40 individuals exhibited the opposite pattern of effects
 41 in both the diary and the lab portions of this study.

42 Viewed in its entirety, this long-standing program
 43 of research has documented that certain types
 44 of stressful situations have powerful and unique
 45 effects on people who have different attachment
 46 styles. Our work has examined the way in which
 47 relationship partners think, feel, *and* behave in a
 48 variety of situations, including lab-based conflict
 49 and support interactions, lab-based relationship-threatening
 50 discussions, major life transitions, and everyday life
 51 stressors. Across these different social contexts,
 52 avoidant people are not always
 53 unsupportive, withdrawn, or uncooperative with

54 their relationship partners; rather, these defining
 55 features of avoidance are elicited by certain types of
 56 stressful situations (e.g., feeling pressure to give or
 57 receive support, to become more intimate, to share
 58 deep emotions). Likewise, anxious people are not
 59 always clingy, demanding, or prone to engaging in
 60 dysfunctional conflict resolution tactics; instead,
 61 the cardinal features of anxiety are evoked by certain
 62 types of stressful situations (e.g., those that pose a
 63 threat to the stability or quality of their relationships).
 64 And secure people are not always supportive,
 65 nondepressed, or inclined to display functional
 66 conflict resolution tactics; the defining features of security
 67 are witnessed primarily in stressful situations
 68 that activate their positive working models and constructive
 69 interpersonal tendencies.

Future Directions

70 In this chapter, we have highlighted how and why
 71 the adoption of a person-by-situation or "interactionist"
 72 approach to the study of relationships can
 73 yield novel and deeper insights into important
 74 relationship dynamics, above and beyond what can be
 75 provided by adopting an exclusively trait or an
 76 exclusively situational approach. Although several
 77 interactionist programs of research currently exist
 78 within the relationships field, person-by-situation
 79 perspectives are by no means the norm. In fact,
 80 there are several prominent domains of theory and
 81 research with both personality and social psychology
 82 that could benefit from the application of interactionist
 83 frameworks. Some long-standing lines of
 84 research might be enriched and expanded by infusing
 85 what we know about certain individual differences
 86 into extant social psychological theories and
 87 models. Other significant lines of research could be
 88 extended and refined by incorporating the functional
 89 meaning of different types of situations into
 90 personality-based theories and models.

91 With respect to how individual differences might
 92 inform major social psychological theories and
 93 models, let's return to interdependence theory. This
 94 comprehensive theory, which focuses on how relationship
 95 partners make decisions about what to do
 96 given the payoffs associated with doing different
 97 activities with or without the partner, has not systematically
 98 examined whether and how people who
 99 score high versus low on certain trait-like measures
 100 (e.g., self-esteem, neuroticism, attachment insecurity)
 101 perceive and respond to certain types of situations
 102 differently (see Kelley et al., 2003). For
 103 example, when deciding what to do in situations
 104 that could reveal whether the current partner really
 105

1 can or cannot be trusted, individuals who are inse-
 2 curesly attached or have low self-esteem should per-
 3 ceive and react quite differently than their securely
 4 attached or high self-esteem counterparts. Anxiously
 5 attached people, for example, may regularly enter or
 6 create situations that allow them to test whether
 7 their partners can truly be trusted (Simpson, 2007),
 8 whereas avoidantly attached people may circumvent
 9 trust-diagnostic situations whenever possible (cf.
 10 Beck & Clark, 2009). Some of the apparent “error”
 11 in prior interdependence studies, therefore, could
 12 be variance that is meaningfully associated with a
 13 person’s standing on a “situationally relevant” trait
 14 measure.

15 While individual difference approaches can
 16 inform social psychological theories and models, a
 17 focus on situational influences can also inform theo-
 18 ries and research that have used primarily personal-
 19 ity-based processes to explain behavior and outcomes
 20 in relationship contexts. In the social support litera-
 21 ture, for example, much empirical work has been
 22 based on the assumption that perceived support is
 23 associated with certain personality characteristics
 24 and that support experiences are, at least in part,
 25 due to biased construal processes (e.g., Sarason,
 26 Sarason, & Shearin, 1986). Support recipients,
 27 however, are embedded in relationships in which
 28 they affect and are affected by their partners, many
 29 of whom serve as their primary source of support.
 30 Hence, casting a wider “situational net” may gener-
 31 ate a better understanding of the extent to which
 32 social support is likely to be effective and to gener-
 33 ate beneficial (or detrimental) intra-and interper-
 34 sonal outcomes. Such outcomes should not only
 35 depend on the personality characteristics of the sup-
 36 port recipient, but also on those of the support pro-
 37 vider (i.e., his/her motivation, skills, and abilities to
 38 provide effective support), the individuals’ relation-
 39 ship history, and how these factors relate to and
 40 interact with each other in specific support-relevant
 41 situations.

42 Whereas studies that have considered multiple
 43 influences on social support processes in ongoing
 44 relationships are still sparse, researchers have begun
 45 to recognize the need for a more integrative perspec-
 46 tive. Lakey and colleagues (1996), for example,
 47 found that support perceptions are significantly
 48 influenced by (1) biases of the support recipient, (2)
 49 personality characteristics of the support provider,
 50 and (3) their statistical interactions. Indeed, recipi-
 51 ent-by-provider interactions were the most impor-
 52 tant determinants of support perceptions across
 53 three studies conducted in different social contexts.

Furthermore, Cutrona et al. (1997) demonstrated 54
 that the personality characteristics (extraversion and 55
 neuroticism) of both the support recipient and his/ 56
 her spouse in conjunction with the immediate rela- 57
 tionship context (relationship mood and history of 58
 support exchanges) affect the support perceptions 59
 and behaviors of both partners. More recently, Iida, 60
 Seidman, Shrout, Fujita, and Bolger (2008) have 61
 shown how characteristics of the support recipient 62
 (e.g., his/her level of support seeking), the provider 63
 (e.g., his/her mood), their relationship (e.g., rela- 64
 tionship anxiety, satisfaction), and the stressor (e.g., 65
 severity of the stressor) all combine to predict sup- 66
 port provision in dating couples. 67

Following the footsteps of Kurt Lewin, we began 68
 this chapter by proposing that, to fully understand 69
how and why people think, feel, and behave as they 70
 do, one must know something about their core dis- 71
 positions, the specific social situations they are 72
 facing, and how these variables may combine (sta- 73
 tistically interact). As the theories, models, and 74
 research reviewed in this chapter reveal, we have 75
 come a long way on the path toward understanding 76
 how certain people *intersect* with certain situations 77
 to predict unique facets of social behavior. Currently, 78
 however, we have a much better understanding of 79
 the principle traits and dispositions that character- 80
 ize people than we do of the fundamental situations 81
 that impact people on a regular basis. Although 82
 inroads have been made toward developing taxono- 83
 mies of the major situations that affect people as 84
 they communicate with others in different social 85
 contexts (e.g., Kelley et al., 2003), further attention 86
 and effort should be devoted to developing, refin- 87
 ing, and testing additional situational taxonomies, 88
 including how certain situations elicit the defining 89
 features of people who possess certain dispositions. 90
 One logical starting point is the six situation dimen- 91
 sions along which Kelley et al.’s (2003) 20 social 92
 situations vary (see Table 20.1). 93

Another pivotal direction for future research is 94
 the incorporation of person-by-situation models 95
 into broader theoretical frameworks. One such 96
 overarching framework is the functionalist strategy 97
 for understanding additional points of connection 98
 between personality and social behavior. According 99
 to the functionalist strategy (Snyder & Cantor, 100
 1998), global/enduring and specific/time-limited 101
 features of people (e.g., their traits) and the major 102
 situational factors that impact people should *jointly* 103
 affect the “agendas” that people formulate and 104
 pursue as they live their lives. The specific agendas 105
 that people develop from the functional goals they 106

1 have are then translated into “action plans” intended
 2 to achieve important life outcomes. Most agendas
 3 fall within four domains: (1) individual-level agen-
 4 das (e.g., clarifying one’s social identify, working on
 5 important personal projects), (2) interpersonal-level
 6 agendas (e.g., getting along with others, influencing
 7 them in specific ways in certain interactions), (3)
 8 relationship-level agendas (e.g., developing and
 9 maintaining comfortable and fulfilling intimacy
 10 and felt security with close partners), and (4) group-
 11 level agendas (e.g., working with certain groups or
 12 organizations to promote valued social causes).

13 Snyder and Cantor (1998) have suggested that
 14 interpersonal relationships should be an excellent
 15 domain within which to test functional models.
 16 Indeed, many of the most fundamental needs that
 17 people have directly involve other people. The need
 18 to establish and maintain some degree of social con-
 19 nectedness with others is a case in point. However,
 20 the amount of social connectedness that a person
 21 seeks and maintains ought to depend on his or her
 22 specific dispositions in relation to the major life sit-
 23 uations with which s/he is currently dealing. For
 24 example, highly avoidant individuals who live in a
 25 communal versus an individualistic culture should
 26 develop different plans and agendas for achieving
 27 and sustaining sufficient social connectedness, given
 28 the norms and expectations of the culture in which
 29 they live. Highly avoidant individuals who live in
 30 collectivistic cultures, for instance, may desire,
 31 accept, or permit greater social connectedness with
 32 others than highly avoidant persons who live in
 33 individualistic cultures (Friedman, Rholes, Simpson,
 34 Bond, Diaz-Loving, & Chan, 2010). This, in turn,
 35 should affect the agendas they develop and pursue
 36 at the personal, interpersonal, relationship, and
 37 group levels, each of which should be tied to impor-
 38 tant life outcomes at each level.

39 One of the most interesting features of the func-
 40 tional strategy is potential intersections and “mis-
 41 matches” between agendas that exist at different
 42 levels (e.g., individual vs. relationship, relationship
 43 vs. group). Mismatches of motivational agendas
 44 can occur within individuals and/or between part-
 45 ners, affecting the well-being of one or both part-
 46 ners and the overall functioning of their relationship.
 47 A person who is highly avoidant, for instance, is
 48 likely to have the proximal goal of maintaining
 49 independence, autonomy, and control in his/her
 50 current relationship. This preference, however,
 51 does not negate the fact that s/he may also have the
 52 more distal need/goal of remaining socially con-
 53 nected to other people. To carry out and ultimately

reconcile these potentially competing agendas, 54
 highly avoidant people may deliberately choose to 55
 enter and avoid certain social situations. 56

Beck and Clark (2009) have, in fact, shown that 57
 more avoidant individuals prefer to enter social situ- 58
 ations that do *not* provide clear feedback about the 59
 degree to which others like or dislike them (i.e., 60
 nondiagnostic social situations), and they deliber- 61
 ately avert social situations that could provide clear 62
 feedback. In so doing, highly avoidant people pro- 63
 tect themselves from possible rejection and pain, 64
 but they also miss out on forming closer, more emo- 65
 tionally connected, and more trusting relationships. 66
 If such persons enter an intimate relationship and 67
 continue to avoid socially diagnostic situations with 68
 their partners, they may also deprive themselves of 69
 positive feedback regarding their partner’s true 70
 amount of affection and commitment for them. 71
 Without such knowledge, highly avoidant people 72
 may find it more difficult to risk themselves and to 73
 become more dependent on and responsive to their 74
 partners (Simpson, 2007). Accordingly, their pri- 75
 mary individual-level agenda—to maintain suffi- 76
 cient autonomy and independence—should affect 77
 the dynamics of their relationship, including their 78
 interpersonal-level agenda—to maintain sufficient 79
 social connections with others. The ultimate fate of 80
 their relationship may therefore depend on their 81
partner’s motivational agenda. If there is a good 82
 match of agendas between the two partners, each 83
 partner may feel satisfied with the relationship, 84
 given that each partner can be a “situational affor- 85
 dance” for the other (e.g., finding ways for the highly 86
 avoidant partner to maintain a sense of control and 87
 independence while still enjoying the company of 88
 mutual friends). If, however, there is a glaring mis- 89
 match (e.g., the partner of the highly avoidant 90
 person demands more closeness and intimacy), 91
 unsatisfactory outcomes are likely to follow and the 92
 relationship could quickly become unstable. 93

Motivational agendas might also be systemati- 94
 cally related to different combinations of personal- 95
 ity traits or characteristics *within* a person, resulting 96
 in the transformation of agendas at different levels. 97
 For example, at the individual level, highly avoidant 98
 people should want to limit emotional intimacy and 99
 remain independent to avert pain associated with 100
 prior rejections. If, however, they are also highly 101
 extraverted, they should be more inclined to enter 102
 different types of social situations. Although their 103
 avoidance should motivate them to prefer nondiag- 104
 nostic social situations, their extraversion may lead 105
 them to enter some socially diagnostic situations, 106

1 which might expose them to positive feedback about
 2 the self from others. This, in turn, may disconfirm
 3 their negative expectations about the responsiveness
 4 of others, thereby weakening their individual-level
 5 agenda of maintaining independence and trans-
 6 forming their interpersonal-level agenda so they
 7 become more receptive to entering mutually inter-
 8 dependent relationships, especially with partners
 9 who allow them to maintain a comfortable amount
 10 of independence.

11 When we consider personality traits in a *dyadic*
 12 context, personality should affect not only the con-
 13 sistency of an individual's behavioral responses in
 14 certain situations (as specified by interactionist
 15 approaches), but also the consistency of behaviors,
 16 thoughts, and emotions displayed in response to
 17 and elicited from relationship partners. According
 18 to this perspective, an individual's behavior is deter-
 19 mined by actor effects (i.e., individual differences in
 20 a person's responses that are consistent across inter-
 21 actions with multiple partners), partner effects (i.e.,
 22 individual differences in the responses a person elic-
 23 its from others, which in turn affect the individual),
 24 and relationship effects (i.e., unique responses that
 25 are specific a given person and partner; Malloy &
 26 Kenny, 1986). These distinctions may have impor-
 27 tant implications for whether and how personality
 28 changes or remains stable over time. Individuals
 29 may, for instance, repeatedly enter relationships
 30 with partners who reinforce their core dispositional
 31 characteristics. A person with low self-esteem, for
 32 instance, may constantly form relationships with
 33 new partners who are dominant or controlling,
 34 simply reinforcing their feelings of worthlessness.
 35 However, such individuals might on occasion
 36 choose partners who do not have these tendencies,
 37 thereby halting the reinforcement of their own core
 38 dispositional tendencies.

39 With respect to long-term relationship function-
 40 ing, the best outcomes are likely to occur when part-
 41 ners' agendas at each of the four levels are consistent
 42 and mesh well with each other. More specifically, to
 43 the extent that each partner's individual, interaction,
 44 relationship, and group agendas tend to be compat-
 45 ible and can be coordinated to achieve goals, the
 46 successful completion of one individual's agendas
 47 should facilitate his/her partner's agendas. These are
 48 just some of the numerous directions in which the
 49 functional strategy might be profitably extended.

50 In closing, social and personality psychology
 51 truly have begun to merge since Lewin first pro-
 52 posed that what individuals think, feel, and do
 53 depends on both who they are *and* the specific life

situations they are confronting. We still must gain a
 deeper understanding of what the principle dimen-
 sions of interpersonal situations are and the condi-
 tions under which they trigger the working models
 that characterize different personality traits. This is
 perhaps the central mission of the next generation
 of research on personality and social behavior.

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