A THEORY OF SELF AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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INTRODUCTION

Let's Be Friends ... In a Limited, Metaphorical Sense

Like most academic people that I know, I crave periodic times of solitude for reflection, contemplation, or just plain free-floating rumination. I do not consider this a personal fault. In fact, I am rather pleased about it, especially considering that Maslow (1970) regarded it one of the marks of a self-actualizing person. One of my favorite times to enjoy such solitude is the noon hour, sitting in our cozy, dignified campus restaurant with my soup, salad, coffee, and --just in case of an earth-shaking insight-- a yellow legal pad. I am sure this little quirk would cause no noticeable stir for most people. For me, however, it is an ever-present source of good-natured gibes from acquaintances and colleagues who have come to think of me as "the friendship guy." "Why does an expert on friendship always have lunch alone?" they ask with mock(?) bemusement.

The appellation "friendship guy," while overly narrow, is not without foundation. I was a graduate student in social psychology in the early 1960s, about the time the systematic study of interpersonal attraction was gaining a great deal of momentum. So thoroughly did I embrace this topic and, eventually, its descendants that my research efforts have been devoted to little else since that time. By the late 1960s, however, I had come somewhat grudgingly to the conclusion that the "standard" sociopsychological approaches to attraction and relationships were not addressing the kinds of questions I was interested in exploring. We were learning quite a bit, I believed, about variables influencing initial attraction, but very little about the nature and functioning of established or developing relationships (Wright, 1968; 1969).

My response to this apparent deficit was to broaden my conceptual span by developing a tentative a model, not of initial attraction, but of the friendship relationship. The model included concepts dealing with the criteria of friendship, classes of interpersonal rewards or "friendship values," and the tension or strain sometimes found in friendships. Along with the model, I constructed a self-report technique called the Acquaintance Description Form (ADF) for measuring the various concepts (Wright, 1969; 1974; 1978). For a time, studies with the model and technique were conducted along "traditional" lines, centering on such problems as attitude similarity and friendship (Wright & Crawford, 1971), and self disclosure and friendship (Pearce, Wright, Sharp & Slama, 1974; Walker & Wright, 1976). As time went on, however, the work became not only more theoretical, but also less "orthodox" in the way it unfolded. Moreover, in the early 1980s, I expanded my focus from friendship in particular to personal relationships in general (Wright & Bergloff, 1982; Wright, 1989).

Little wonder, though, that my colleagues in departments other than psychology identify me as "the friendship guy." Although my current research emphasizes the relationship dysfunction labeled codependency (Wright & Wright, 1990; 1991), most of my work as of this writing has, indeed, dealt with friendship. Besides, what my non-psychologist colleagues know of it has come mostly from coffee shop chats, a university-sponsored public lecture (Wright, 1976), an occasional interdepartmental colloquim, and a series of columns in the local newspaper --all on friendship. Little wonder, either, that they direct playful(?) barbs at my apparent lack of facility in attracting and keeping friends.

Being known as the friendship guy has, on occasion, drawn me into exchanges of a less frivolous sort. The most memorable of these occurred during the summer of 1980, when the late Joe Smeall cornered me in the library. Joe was a professor of English who had a penchant for asking intriguing questions, then arguing eloquently against whatever answers were forthcoming. For me, Joe had a lot of stimulation value.

"I just ran across an idea that might interest you," he said. "Someone said that when a person reads a book, that person enters into a friendship with the author. Do you think that idea has any merit?"

I squinted thoughtfully and pondered the question for several seconds. "Sort of," I answered.

"What?" Joe asked. For Joe, "sort of" was not acceptable academic talk.

"In a limited, almost metaphorical sense," I said. Now I was talking Joe's language.

"How so?"

"Well, friends are interdependent on a purely voluntary basis. They commit time and effort to interaction with one another, and they usually do this without any constraint from demands or expectations that are external to the friendship itself. I call this 'voluntary interdependence.' "

"So what about the author and the reader?"

"I think it would be safe to say that there is a low level of interdependence between them. The reader commits time and effort to reading the book, which he or she obviously would not do if someone hadn't expended the time and effort to write it. And it's voluntary. The author was under no specific obligation to write the book, and the reader is normally under no obligation to read it. I suppose this is voluntary interdependence, in a limited, metaphorical sense."

"Exactly!" Joe exclaimed, and walked away.

I was nonplussed. I had expected a debate. Besides, I wanted to spend some time discussing some of the important ways in which the author-reader relationship does not even come close to being like friendship.

For about a year after my encounter with Joe I occasionally asked myself how much my own writing about relationships was analogous to establishing a friendship with potential readers. The answer was always very little, if at all. The reason for this was not hard to find. In addition to being interdependent on a voluntary basis, friends show a personalized concern for each other. This includes an interest in one another's individuality, and involves communicating in open and unfeigned ways. Ordinarily, the more they do this, the stronger the friendship. Following Suttles (1970), I call this the Person-qua-Person factor. But social scientists in general and social psychologists in particular are socialized to construct their written reports in ways that are inimical to forming an author-reader friendship, even in a limited, metaphorical sense. We practice and teach that our professional writing must be not only logical, empirically sound and well-documented, but also detached and impersonal. Any but the most fleeting references to our personal involvement in our studies and conceptual models are considered irrelevant, if not intrusive.

While recognizing the hazards of unbridled subjectivism, I could think of sound academic reasons for considering an overly rigid adherence to this depersonalized style unfortunate. It is not unusual and may, in fact, be typical for us to wax eloquent on our personal involvement in our relationships and our relationship studies when we chat informally with our colleagues and when we teach our students. I have always felt enriched and enlightened by the additional insights provided by such "inside stories," and honestly believe that my colleagues and students have felt the same way. Nevertheless, I finally concluded that if the depersonalized style was the way to accomplish our formal business, so be it. I could live with it and, in fact, did live with it for another eight years or so. At the end of that time, however, Bochner (1989) re-awakened my interest in the matter with his provocative presentation to the Fifth International Conference on Personal Relationships.

Moving Toward a Personal Modus Operandi

Bochner's address dealt in an explicit way with several issues that, although unarticulated, I now realize have long been close to the surface of my thinking about personal relationships. Let us look briefly at three of his major points.

First, Bochner argued that scientific inquiry does not yield knowledge about personal relationships that is necessarily more reality-based, and hence more valid, than that gleaned from novels, plays, diaries, personal experience, and other so-called subjective sources. Rather than being a reflection of a "truer" or higher-level reality, scientific inquiry itself is but a special way of constructing a consensual social reality. Far from proposing that we abandon a painstaking scientific approach, he urged us to give equal consideration to other sources of insight and, implicitly, to work toward developing models and theories that embrace both approaches.

Following up on this point, he proposed that prediction and control need not be our only, or even our primary, aim in studying personal relationships. Instead --or in addition-- our aim could be interpretation and informed participation. From the former perspective, the goal would be to control variables that are known to affect relationships for the purpose of manipulating outcomes. From the latter perspective, the goal would be to arrive at a heightened awareness of

relationship characteristics and processes for the purpose of more effective involvement in them. Elsewhere (Wright, 1989), I unwittingly --and somewhat apologetically-- alluded to this possibility as a useful "sensitizing function" of an as yet tentative theory.

Finally, Bochner underscored the now trite observation that relationship researchers are themselves people with relationship histories and relationship experiences. Thus, each researcher comes to his or her task with a host of expectations, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about people and about relationships. Such factors are normally considered serious obstacles to objective inquiry, i.e., as potential sources of bias to be overcome (see, e.g., Kelley, Berscheid, Christensen, Harvey, Huston, Levinger, McClintock, Peplau, and Peterson, 1983, p. 21). Not so for Bochner. Rather than denying, ignoring or attempting to factor out these personal elements, Bochner suggested that we recognize them, accept them and give them full play in our work. They are, after all, valid samples of the way relationships are experienced in everyday life. Why not capitalize on them in formulating our theories and models?

Due to its explicitness and clarity, Bochner's address came across as somewhat of a voice crying in the wilderness. But it was not, I believe, a particularly lonely voice. As I hope to demonstrate in the following chapter, there are a number of trends within the field of personal relationships that appear to foreshadow, if not actualize, the broadened and personalized focus Bochner was appealing for. To cite just one example, Harvey and his associates (Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch, 1990) adroitly conceptualize and analyze subjects' deeply meaningful subjective accounts in ways that enhance and clarify rather than diminish their personal, "real life" significance. Nevertheless, his presentation had the effect of bringing both the nature of the field and my own past efforts into a much clearer focus. It also revived my interest in presenting my theory within a more personalized framework. Specifically, I am now more sharply aware of the kind of theory I have been working on, including its limits and potential value. I am also more cognizant of --or more willing to acknowledge-- the extent to which that theory has been shaped by "extra-scientific" sources, and the extent to which I have applied personalized as well as formal (by the book) criteria in judging the relevance and usefulness of the work of others in the relationship field.

The reader may have noticed that, in addition to explicit references to social psychology, I have alluded in a matter of fact way to a "field" of personal relationships. These allusions appear to take it for granted that such a field exists as an identifiable academic entity, and that most interested parties know about it. Indeed, such a field does exist, but I am not sure that most potentially interested parties know about it. My own awareness that a field of personal relationships was emerging grew in a gradual fashion. Because my own work on friendship originated within social psychology, it was initially conducted, to the best of my ability, in the "social psychology" way. But it was not long before I noticed that research on personal relationships --as opposed to interpersonal attraction-- was sprouting up all around me, and that this research originated in a wide variety of disciplines. I was powerfully drawn to much of this work, and eagerly hopped on the bandwagon when a number of energetic scholars took the first steps toward weaving the various disciplinary threads into the semblance of a multidisciplinary tapestry (see Chapter 1). In a very real sense, then, my own research and theory grew up within, or at least alongside, the development of the relationship field, and was strongly influenced by it.

In the orientation chapter that follows, I hope to provide the reader with a framework for assessing the merits and demerits of the theory to be presented in detail in the remainder of the book. I can best do this, I believe, by starting with a perspective on the relationship field as a whole, including a personalized analysis of the stresses and strains --and opportunities-- inherent in efforts to accomodate differing theoretical views and methodological conventions. This overview will include a discussion of my own emergent modus operandi with respect to the empirical foundations of the relationship field. I will then place my own theory within this broad perspective by outlining the "critical incidents" in its origins and development, following this with a synopsis of the theory itself. I will then close Chapter 1 with my frank assessment of the nature of the theory and its niche within the relationship field.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

The "Field" of Personal Relationships: A View from the Trenches

In 1979, Robert Hinde proposed that it was time to think about developing a "science" of personal relationships. As so often happens, this proposal was less a call to something new than a discerning statement about trends that were already well underway. Scholars in a variety of disciplines were at work on research problems that fed into the emergence of the field of personal relationships, and that continue to form a substantial part of its subject matter. If my experience is a valid indicator, such a field grew out of the double-edged recognition that a) the study of relationships was neither the exclusive nor the primary domain of any one discipline, and b) relationship work in one discipline could greatly inform and enhance similar work in others. In metaphorical terms, the field of personal relationships started taking shape when the source disciplines became more than acquaintances and started becoming friends. As literarian C. S. Lewis (1960) put it:

> Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discovers that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one" (p. 96).

Since the early 1980s the field has shown impressive growth and vitality. For a time, scholars referred tentatively to the "emerging" field of personal relationships (see, e.g., Berscheid and Peplau, 1983). Recently, Duck (1988) argued that it is time to drop the charade; the field of personal relationships is not emerging, it is here. It is a field that involves the active participation of several hundred scholars from a wide array of disciplines who have organized themselves into both international and local societies, often with a noticeable overlap in membership. These societies convene conferences that permit large numbers of the participants get together at frequent intervals. In response to the growing research and theoretical output of

these scholars, the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships was founded, with the first issue appearing in 1984. The journal, the societies, and the conferences provide, collectively, a forum that maintains the identity of the field and sustains its momentum.

Defining the Field

What, then, is the "essence" of the field of personal relationships? What lies at its core? What defines its scope and limits? Until recently, when such questions infiltrated my more contemplative moments, I considered them interesting but largely rhetorical. I found myself identifying with the plight of servicemen home on furlough when I was a youngster during World War II. The folks at home, eager for a broader and deeper perspective, often asked them what the war was "really" all about. More often than not, they learned that the serviceman's perspective on the war was usually no wider than the next objective or the next mission or the next R & R leave. Or, in the thick of battle, no wider than the neighboring foxholes or the adjacent bombers in the formation.

As one who was involved in relationship research before the field emerged, I was in a somewhat analogous situation. When the field started taking shape, I happily joined in for the ride. For the most part, however, I continued pursuing the same kinds of research in the same kinds of ways as before. Therefore, I most often approached the field in terms of the next question to address, the next problem to conceptualize, the next study to design and execute, the next set of disparate findings to reconcile, or the next batch of relevant literature to survey. In this process, as I hope to make clear in due course, I sometimes tried to think in interdisciplinary terms by adopting --or at least considering-- ideas and concepts from several disciplines. It is noteworthy, I believe, that this adoption happened only when, and to the degree that, ideas from these different disciplines seemed relevant for a refined or expanded analysis of a particular problem under investigation. It did not happen as a result of a conviction that I ought to be working toward an interdisciplinary "science."

More recently, the self-imposed task of locating my own work within the context of the field as a whole forced me out of the trenches (so to speak) to adopt a more comprehensive view. As a result, questions about the scope and limits of the field surfaced with greater insistence. Pondering these questions leaves me with the considered opinion that, at its most definitive, the field of personal relationships is an affiliation of scholars and practitioners from a variety of social and behavioral sciences whose concern with interpersonal relations and personal relationships is focal rather than peripheral or, alternatively, essential rather than incidental.

The field of personal relationships then, as I once said of friendship (Wright, 1978), is characterized by extremely broad and ambiguous boundaries. Its breadth gives rise to a topical, theoretical, and methodological diversity that is both healthy and bewildering. This diversity, I believe, makes it more realistic and, for most of us, tactically more productive to think of personal relationships as primarily a multidisciplinary "field" rather than an interdisciplinary "science."

Healthy, Bewildering Diversity

That the diversity is both healthy and bewildering is evident in the variety as well as the sheer amount of enlightening and stimulating literature produced by scholars who identify themselves as relationship researchers. Topics include, for example, courtship, marriage, friendship, life stages and friendship, companionate love, passionate love, distinctions between friendship and love, personal relationships and physical health, communication patterns, gender and relationships, dysfunctional relationships, relationship deterioration and dissolution, spouse abuse, child abuse, ad infinitum.

Apart from the diversity of topical interests, the field is marked by a diversity of preferences, emphases, and outright controversies concerning the most adequate conceptual and methodological approaches to relationship studies. Some scholars advocate a structural approach emphasizing social and situational variables such as social class, age, marital status, occupational status, norms, roles, rules, and scripts. Others advocate a dispositional approach emphasizing intraindividual variables such as intimacy motives, power motives, attachment styles, love styles, esteem needs, gender role orientations, and social anxiety. On another dimension, some researchers give priority to a behavioral focus, emphasizing what "really happens" in relationships, i.e., the acts and events that actually take place, whereas others give priority to a cognitive focus, emphasizing the partners' expectations and beliefs about relationships, including their respective perceptions and interpretations of acts and events, and the meanings they attach to them. Related to this, some investigators prefer observational techniques that enable them to record "objectively" and to code systematically what the partners do and say whereas others prefer self-report techniques that tap the partners' own self-observations and "subjective" reactions. Further, some researchers rely most heavily, if not exclusively, on data from carefully controlled interaction in laboratory settings whereas others rely on data from essentially free, ongoing interaction in field settings. Finally, some scholars concentrate on relationship states such as marital status, friendship versus non-friendship, intimacy levels, strength of commitment, and satisfaction levels whereas others concentrate on relationship processes such as courtship trajectories, relational transitions, communication strategies, the management of relationship paradoxes, and relationship dissolution.

In sum, so many scholars representing so many viewpoints and methodologies have produced so much information and insight on so many relationship types, relationship processes, relationship problems, and relationship nuances that the aggregated output defies systematic organization. Fortunately, a number of authors have succeeded in blending large blocks of this substantive yield into excellent volumes organized around selected topical themes (see, e.g., Brehm, 1992; Duck, 1988a; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992).

What, Then, Makes the Field a Field?

If, as I have concluded, the aggregated output of relationship scholars defies systematic overall organization, are we justified in claiming that the study of personal relationships has arrived as an identifiable academic field? Has relationship research from disparate source disciplines really begun to meld into a unified "inter-discipline?" The answer, of course, depends upon the criteria one imposes on the definition of an academic field. At the most stringent, one might insist on genuine conceptual integration rather than mere conceptual allusion or conceptual "borrowing" among source disciplines. Somewhat less stringently, one

might ask whether relationship research is being conducted that would not be conducted, or that would be conducted in a substantially different way, if the field did not exist. Less stringently yet, one might be content with the fact that relationship research within one discipline often involves a "borrowing" of (i.e., an awareness of and reference to) relevant findings and concepts from other disciplines.

In a call for greater recognition that the study of personal relationships is unavoidably multidisciplinary, Duck (1988) implicitly endorsed the criterion of "cross-disciplinary borrowing." He framed the issue in the following way: "What remains to be established with greater certainty and clarity in some quarters is the extent to which the field of research in personal relationships is inherently and necessarily cross-disciplinary" (p. xv). He then supported his plea by noting that reports and reviews of relationship work conducted within one discipline often, and increasingly, refer to supportive work from others. Then, too, there are some areas of relationship research that show an effective blending of concepts across disciplines. The work of Shaver and his associates (see, e.g., Shaver, Hazen & Bradshaw, 1988), for example, integrates work from child development on attachment theory with a number of long-standing topics in the social psychology of interpersonal relations and personal relationships.

On the other hand, much (perhaps most) of the research that falls well within the purview of the relationship field is conducted along traditional and well-defined disciplinary lines. One recent example from sociology and another from anthropology will suffice to illustrate the point. Working within the framework of symbolic interactionism, Wiseman (1991) provided a detailed and finely nuanced analysis of the sociopsychological situation of wives of alcoholic men, emphasizing the ways their relationships were maintained --and changed-- with their chronically drinking husbands. Anthropologist Sarah Uhl (1991) studied patterns of relating among women in Andalusia, Spain. She found that friendships, which were formally forbidden to women, were nonetheless formed and maintained --and even recognized by the women as such-- but veiled within the context of acceptable domestic routines. There is no reason to believe that such research would not have been conducted, or that it would have been conducted differently, if there were no such thing as an identifiable field called "personal relationships."

My view of the field, then, as one barely out of the trenches, is that its "official" participants consist of representatives of a variety of source disciplines whose only claim to unity is an avid interest in the multifaceted subject of personal relationships. A few of these participants appear to be committed to developing a new and unified discipline. Most, however, are content to explore circumscribed problems within the relationship field, and to develop limited conceptual models relative to those problems. In the course of developing their models, they tend to stay close to the concepts and methods of the source disciplines they represent while remaining open and receptive to relevant input from other disciplines. This, I believe, is the way in which "pockets" of conceptual integration are (slowly) taking place. And it is why I am not at all troubled by my impression that the field, at present, is mostly multidisciplinary rather than genuinely interdisciplinary.

Stretching the "Relationship Paradigm"

Against this backdrop, I find the call to work toward a "science" of personal relationships more fanciful than inspiring. Moreover, I believe that pronouncements about what such a science should look like (e.g., Hinde, 1981; Kelley, 1986), including tentative causal models (Kelley, et al., 1983), are not useful and sometimes appear to be prescriptive and doctrinaire. Such models simply overlook too much of the potential range and variety of relationship phenomena. Rather early in the game, Duck and Sants (1983) pointed out that prematurely limiting our conceptual and observational focus may result in conceptions of personal relationships that are not only incomplete, but distorted. More recently, Duck (1990) provided a fine-grained interpretive review of the growing emphasis upon relationships as ongoing, emergent processes, an emphasis that does not fit readily into more traditional ways of conceptualizing dyadic interaction. It is at this point that I see a developing line of cleavage in thinking concerning the study of relationships.

The cleavage I have in view cannot easily be framed in terms of the usual dichotomies we use to contrast differing conceptual and methodological positions. It is not, for example, a matter of structural versus dispositional approaches, or cognitive versus behavioral emphases, or field versus laboratory settings, or self-report versus observational techniques. It is not even a matter of state versus process analyses, although this dichotomy is perhaps the core issue in the cleavage. Rather, the cleavage has some of the trappings of, not a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1973), but what I prefer to think of as a "paradigm stretch." Admittedly, in the Kuhnian sense, the relationship field is non-paradigmatic or, at best, "preparadigmatic." However, the way many relationship scholars do (and do not) ply their trade reflects some of important characteristics of a paradigm. These characteristics are revealed more clearly in what we take for granted than in what we state explicitly. The degree to which they are taken for granted is evident in what is usually said and not said in outlines of research designs and procedures pertinent to the relationship field (see, e.g. Harvey, Christensen & McClintock, 1983). Let us look at one important aspect of what I take to be the relationship paradigm.

It is taken for granted that we will conceptualize our problems in terms of antecedent conditions and consequents, or independent and dependent variables. Even though we admit that most of our studies are correlational rather than experimental, we are generally thinking in terms of pre-existing (antecedent) conditions that "stay put" or remain stable, and that affect other conditions that are presumably less stable and more susceptible to change. The pre-existing condition may be a structural or a dispositional variable hypothesized to affect the nature of a relationship, or it may be a relationship variable hypothesized to affect a personal disposition or relational outcome. Senchak & Leonard (1992), for example, studied attachment styles and marital adjustment, implicitly using different attachment styles as the independent variable and marital adjustment as the dependent variable. On the other hand, Brennan, Shaver, & Toby (1991) studied attachment styles and parental problem drinking, implicitly using the presence or absence of parental problem drinking as the independent variable and individual attachment styles as the dependent variable.

Researchers who investigate relationships as dynamic processes rather than static states also follow this aspect of the paradigm. At times, variations in relational processes are conceptualized as dependent variables that are a function of conditions (independent variables) external to the relationship. At other times, relational processes are conceptualized as dependent

variables that are a function of other processes (taken as independent variables) within the relationship itself. Surra, Arrizi, & Asmussen (1988), for example, offered a tentative model for changes in commitment in the development of marital relationships. Their model proposed that changes in commitment (a relational process) may be either event-driven (a function of external factors) or relationship-driven (a function of other processes within the relationship), or both. In any case, whether the focus is upon relationship states or relationship processes, the vast majority of us conceptualize our models and our studies within a framework that implicitly accepts as ideal the traditional breakdown into antecedent conditions and consequents.

As part of this traditional breakdown, it is generally taken for granted that the observations or measures we use to operationalize our variables will be well delineated and reliable. Fair enough. But it is also taken for granted that, as the ideal, these data will be collected under carefully controlled or, lacking this, clearly specified conditions. Qualitative data are acceptable to the degree that they are amenable to standard statistical analyses, the ideal being systematic quantification or classification into abstract categories.

Judging again from my experiences in the trenches, I believe this traditional paradigm has been and still is an extremely productive one for the relationship field. Moreover, I am familiar with it, comfortable with it, and will undoubtedly continue to give it prominence in my own work. However, there are at least three points at which the overall adequacy of the paradigm is being challenged by the ways in which a number of researchers are beginning to conceptualize and investigate relationship processes.

The first and most fundamental challenge stems from the view that relationship development is a fluid process giving rise to emergent --in fact, continually emerging-- properties. That is, the process itself results in relational characteristics that cannot be adequately understood if they are divided into isolated component parts, including component parts that may have existed as dispositional or structural conditions prior to the beginning of the relationship. Another way of saying this is that, as personal relationships develop, nothing "stays put" or remains stable. Everything changes. Therefore, to identify one set of conditions as pre-existing and stable, and another as contingent and variable is not only arbitrary, but also misleading. This view, of course, challenges the adequacy of conceptualizing relational processes in terms of antecedent conditions and consequents.

The foregoing conception of the emergent quality of relationship phenomena bears a kinship to the symbolic interactionist approach as reflected in the seminal work of Murray Davis (1973) on intimate relationships and the recent work of Wiseman (1991) on wives of alcoholics. Both of these scholars conceptualize the person's participation in a relationship as a pattern of reasoned responses to her/his definition of the situation, including her/his role in it. Expectations based on the formal norm and role structure provide a generalized framework setting the scope and limits for the person's individualized definition of the situation which, in turn, develops from the course of interaction between the partners. Although the relationship tends to stabilize due to the reciprocal roles that develop between the partners, events both within and outside the relationship can and typically do affect the course of their interaction. Therefore, the person's definition of the relational situation, and hence her/his responses to it, are subject to changes that are understandable only in terms of the ongoing interactive process.

The focus upon emergent relational qualities as a formal approach to the study of relationships was clearly anticipated by Duck and Sants' (1983; see also Duck, 1988b, Chapter 8) broad-gauged critique centering on the inadequacy of viewing relationships as states or endpoints rather than as processes. Duck and Sants argued that a relationship is not best considered a dyadic status that is achieved and successfully maintained on the basis of favorable pre-existing variables, e.g., a fortuitous mix of the partners' personal attributes. Rather, a relationship shows a continuity of development that, among other things, enables the partners to experience the relationship in terms of a remembered past and an anticipated future as well as a salient present. The way the partners construct --or reconstruct-- their memories about the relationship and envision its future both influence and are influenced by its present character. Thus, a personal relationship is strongly affected by, indeed gets much of its definition from, factors that develop within the relational process itself.

As a formalized conceptual strategy, the view of relationships as emergent phenomena rather than resultant end states finds strong expression in dialectical theory (see, e.g., Baxter, 1988). From the dialectical point of view, major dilemmas or contradictions are inevitable aspects of relational life. Examples of these contradictions include (among many others) dependence versus independence, detachment versus intimacy, and self-protectiveness versus expressiveness. Such contradictions, or "dialectical tensions," are not ambiguities that are eventually clarified or conflicts that are permanently resolved. Nor are they matters that the relational partners ever settle or decide upon once and for all. They are, instead, realities to be lived with and dealt with on a continuing basis as long as the partners experience any kind of relationship with one another.

Because dialectical tensions are part and parcel of the relational process as a whole, certain phenomena --e.g., intimacy and commitment-- cannot be adequately understood as discrete or isolated variables. Rather, what we recognize as intimacy and commitment reflect the manner in which the partners manage tensions created by the detachment-intimacy and dependence-independence dichotomies in their ongoing relationship. Therefore, "levels" of intimacy and commitment will normally be observed to fluctuate over time as the partners experience both positive and negative developments within the relationship. Such fluctuations are, of course, most noticeable in crises or relational transitions. Masheter & Harris (1986), for example, demonstrated the interpretive value of the dialectical approach in a study of a couple who progressed from the beginnings of stress and misunderstanding in their marriage through a divorce and then on to a close, satisfying post-marriage friendship. Conville (1988) provided a similarly useful analysis of a couple whose marriage survived a transition through separation and a near divorce to the resumption of their marriage under a new and more satisfying set of meanings and rules.

Although not directly concerned with emergent properties, Descriptive Psychology (Davis & Todd, 1982; 1985) provides yet another approach that challenges the necessity of the antecedents/consequents formulation. From this viewpoint, our understanding of behavior is not best served by seeking and establishing causal links between dependent and independent variables. Rather, our understanding of behavior is best served by gaining systematic knowledge of the subject's multifaceted but unified conception of the activity in question. Within context of

personal relationships, the aim of Descriptive Psychology would be to determine the consensual conception among subjects of the fundamental character --the "is-ness" and "wholeness"-- of different kinds of relationships. Subjects' behaviors in relationships are assumed to flow from that conception without regard for what leads to what. This point of view is well exemplified in Davis and Todd's (1982; 1985) identification of the essential characteristics of friendship and of romantic love, and the assessment of definitive differences between them.   The second challenge to the traditional paradigm stems from the increasing use of qualitative data taken essentially at face value, i.e., not quantified or classified abstractly, but codified (if at all) in terms of its meaning for the relational partners. Not surprisingly, this practice has been most evident in the work of scholars emphasizing relational processes over relationship states including, but not limited to, those favoring the symbolic interactionist and dialectic approaches. Examples of such qualitative data include novels and other literary sources used as bona fide relationship data, the more familiar in-depth interview and, more recently, relatively brief retrospective accounts. McCall (1974), for example, used literary references sparingly but seriously in an early statement of the symbolic interactionist approach to interpersonal attraction. Davis (1973), another sociologist, used both classical and contemporary literature extensively and even more seriously (than McCall) in his treatment of intimate relationships.

The time-worn method of in-depth interviewing appears to be on the increase, or at least not waning, in studies of personal relationships. Gouldner & Strong (1987) used such interviews as their sole source of data in a study of friendships among middle class women, as did Wiseman in her interpretive analysis of both positive and negative implications of the voluntary character of friendship (1986), and in her cross-cultural comparison of wives of alcoholic men in Finland and the United States (1992). Uhl (1991) relied heavily on interviews, in combination with participant observation, in her anthropological study of friendships among women in Andalusia, Spain. Working within the dialectical perspective, Rawlins & Holl (1987) used guided interviews with high school juniors to examine adolescents' communication patterns with their parents and peers, and Rawlins (1992) combined interviews with the extensive use of literary references in an extended study of friendship over the life course.

Also working within the dialectical perspective, Masheter & Harris (1986) and Conville (1988) demonstrated that qualitative data can be interpreted in a way that maintains a dyadic focus on relationship development. In each case, the researchers identified a couple that had undergone a relational transition, and solicited relatively brief retrospective reports from each partner recounting the course of this transition. Parallel analyses revealed that these accounts, in spite of variations in each partner's contribution, were useful in identifying dyadic themes.

The outcome of these and other essentially "non-statistical" approaches to relationship studies indicate that qualitative data qualitatively analyzed can be a source of significant insight and understanding. This further suggests that, for some kinds of relationship research, precise quantification and amenability to statistical analysis do not constitute a necessary ideal.

The third challenge to the traditional paradigm stems from the not uncommon plea for at least some researchers to devote a lion's share of their effort securing observations or records from ongoing relationships in natural, uncontrived settings. It is reflected in methodologies that tap the contents of actual day to day encounters between relationship partners. Examples are the

Rochester Interaction Record (Nezlak & Wheeler, 1984) and the more recent Iowa Communication Record (Duck, Rutt, Hurst & Strejc,1991). The use of such techniques is not, as sometimes assumed, a less-than-ideal substitute for "real" scientific procedures, --i.e., experimental manipulations or observations in highly controlled situations-- when use of these "real" procedures is impossible, impractical or unethical. Rather, it is based on the conviction that an undistorted conception of many relationship phenomena cannot be developed apart from the use of naturalistic data. This runs counter to the generally taken-for-granted view that the more precisely we can delineate stimulus conditions, the more valid and theoretically useful our findings will be.

Implications for Empirical Strategies

My preference for the term paradigm "stretch" over either "clash" or "shift" follows from my impression of what most researchers in the relationship field do. In our daily work, most of us do not address the field as a whole. We confine ourselves to broad but reasonably well delineated areas of inquiry, and conduct research on focused questions within those areas. For some of us, the "standard" approach is well suited to kinds of questions we are trying to answer. But for some, --e.g., those who are interested in emergent relational qualities, process qua process, fluidity rather than stability, and variability as well as consistency-- the standard approach is proving too restrictive. They reject the "hammer" in the aphorism coined by Mark Twain and recently paraphrased (anonymously) as Maslow's Maxim: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything like a nail." Thus, while it is unlikely that the traditional "paradigm" will be abandoned or even radically changed, new and erstwhile unfitting elements will be added.

It is too soon to predict the precise form these new elements will take. This will be worked out in the usual way. Interested researchers working on specific questions will develop concepts and methodologies that yield, on a day to day basis, the kinds of answers they are looking for. Thus, it is too soon to predict with certainty how the new elements will be absorbed into the field, and what the stretched paradigm will look like. What does seem likely, however, is that concepts and techniques emphasizing the descriptive, the interpretive, the qualitative, and the transitory will be accorded a legitimacy approaching that now reserved for the causal, the analytic, the quantitative, and the stable (c.f. Bochner, 1989). In fact, with the increased acceptance and visibility of qualitative approaches in contemporary relationship research, I believe this is already beginning to happen.

A "Private" Modus Operandi

Given my view of the growing edge of the relationship field, I can easily envision the possibility that researchers working on a given substantive topic will soon begin combining qualitative/interpretive and quantitative/analytic approaches in an effective blending of empirical strategies. As one who has long relied on qualitative observations "in the closet," I applaud this possibility.

In the course of my relationship with the relationship field, I have developed an unpublicized modus operandi for dealing with the interplay --some would say "dialectical

tension"-- between well operationalized and tightly controlled studies producing clean, replicable, but narrowly circumscribed "results" versus looser, more qualitative and interpretive observations producing broad, full-bodied, but conceptually less precise "understandings" of "real life" relationships. Although this modus operandi bears a loose kinship and strong sympathy to current qualitative strategies, it is less structured, less refined, and serves a different purpose. What I have been doing informally, privately, and none too systematically in the service of more "traditional" research others (e.g., Conville, 1988; Masheter & Harris, 1986; Rawlins, 1992) are doing formally, publicly, and systematically as an empirical strategy in its own right. Let us now look at my heretofore "secret" tactic and its raison d' etre.

Simply put, my modus operandi consists of alternating my observational focus between systematic research findings and what I see happening in relationships in daily life, frequently "testing" each perspective against the other. It involves giving very serious attention to samples of ongoing relationships wherever I can find them --in novels, biographies, films, plays, conversations, interviews, advice columns, and my own relational experiences. Although I do this privately, informally, and non-systematically, I do it purposefully, vigorously, unobtrusively and, to the best of my ability, open-mindedly. At first, I used this tactic only to monitor the development of my own work. Eventually, however, I started using it as a important, albeit secondary, means of assessing the potential value of relationship work in general.

The manner in which this modus operandi evolved will become clearer when I discuss the origins and development of my theory. Suffice it so say for now that this perspective on the empirical aspects of the relationship field represents a change from my earliest views, which were marked by a rather rigid positivism. I considered clear and seemingly unambiguous research support (ideally, experimental support) both necessary and sufficient to establish the validity of a hypothesis, model, or theory. Over time, I have lost none of my conviction concerning the value and necessity of a quantitative empirical approach. I have, however, become less stringent in what I regard as acceptably empirical, and more sharply aware of the limits of an overly restrictive empiricism.

This "liberalized" view resulted from a realization, rather early on, that my narrowly defined empiricism had become more of a master than a servant in guiding the way I conducted and evaluated relationship studies. Doing things "properly" was more important than understanding relationships. I decided that this would not do, at least in my own work. To put it another way, I came to the conclusion that demonstrating relationships between (or among) carefully defined and operationalized variables was not necessarily the same thing as enhancing our understanding of relationships between (or among) people. As vital as systematic empirical demonstration is, another question remains: Does this model or theory or set of findings help us to see more in personal relationships, or to see something about relationships more clearly, than before? At the very least, is this model or theory or set of findings consistent with what we see in personal relationships as we observe and experience them in everyday life? Hence my emergent modus operandi as described above.

My serious but informal reliance on qualitiative observations notwithstanding, I still favor an emphasis upon careful operational definitions and quantitative analyses. For me, the field of personal relationships is soundly empirical or it is nothing. The criterion of real life

applicability is secondary. It serves as one of several hedges against proposing --or accepting-- theories, models, or sets of findings that appear to yield distorted or misleading views of personal relationships due to variables that are inflated in importance by, for example, operational constraints or subtle demand characteristics. Try as we might to avoid or control such sources of potential distortion, the fact remains: What we look at is what we see; what we look for limits what we can find; the questions we ask, and the way we ask them, exert a controlling influence on the answers we will get. For me, periodic "reality checks" constitute an essential aspect of the study of personal relationships.

The Theory in Perspective

Just as most relationship researchers work empirically within delimited areas of inquiry, they are also content to build conceptual models confined to those areas. Few of us are concerned with over-arching models or "grand theories." Nor, given the diversity of subject matter and conceptual focus within the field, should we be. Our theories, when we claim to have them, are of the limited domain" (Schutz, 1992) or "middle range" variety (Merton, 1957). There are, strictly speaking, no theories of personal relationships, only theories about personal relationships.

My own theory, like others in the field, is a theory about rather than of personal relationships. As such, it has, in G. A. Kelly's (1955) terms, a focus and a range of convenience (applicability) and, ipso facto, a considerable range of non-applicability. Moreover, the theory did not develop in a particularly orthodox fashion. As a backdrop for evaluating its merits and demerits, the reader will benefit, I believe, from a brief account of where the theory came from, including some of the personal predilections of the author that influenced its development. Following this, I will provide a synopsis of the theory as it now stands, and finally my assessment of its overall nature and potential niche within the relationship field.

Origins of the Theory

The work leading to the development of the relationship theory originated well within the confines of the traditional paradigm. So much so that I did not undertake the work with any intention of formulating a theory. My aim was to provide a purely descriptive model and a coordinated measuring technique for exploring various facets of friendship (Wright, 1969; 1985). Simply put, all I aspired to was the definition and measurement of a set of dependent variables that, taken as a whole, would capture some of the complexity and nuances of the friendship relationship. This effort was my response to what I regarded a conceptually and methodologically narrow approach to the study of interpersonal attraction (see Wright, 1965; 1968; 1969). Eventually, I discovered that I was not alone in this concern (see, e.g., Altman, 1974; Fiebert and Fiebert, 1969; Kerckhoff, 1974; Marlowe and Gergen, 1969).

True to my training as a psychological (as opposed to sociological) social psychologist, I derived the original set of friendship concepts as clearly as possible from published research on attraction, then adapted standard techniques of scale construction to develop a self-report instrument to measure them. The first version of this instrument, called the Acquaintance Description Form (ADF), included a measure of friendship strength, measures of three different

benefits or direct rewards of friendship, a measure of tension or strain, and a measure of a generally favorable or unfavorable response set (see Wright, 1969).

At first, the original version of the ADF seemed to fulfill the purpose I envisioned. It provided a set of variables useful for both experimental and correlational studies (see, e.g., Pearce, Wright, Sharp & Slama, 1974; Walker & Wright, 1976; Wright & Crawford, 1971). Moreover, it appeared to be free of serious technical flaws. Thus, the model and the technique seemed adequate by formal criteria. I was, however, bothered by a growing conviction that something was lacking. I knew from informal sources --novels, films, plays, essays, advice columns, acquaintances' spontaneous actions and comments, my own self-analytic reflections-- that the model overlooked some variables (I was not sure how many) that were crucial to an adequate conception of friendship. Accordingly, I adopted the practice of conducting informal non-directive interviews with subjects following their participation in my studies. Along with this, I often seized upon opportunities to engage both well-known acquaintances and strangers (e.g., seat-mates on airplanes) in conversations that amounted to informal non-directive interviews about friendship. In addition, I spent a lot of time self-consciously but unsystematically analyzing literary and other naturally occurring observations of friendships in terms of potential underlying concepts. Eventually, as I have already noted, I started using this recourse to everyday observations not only as a source of potentially useful concepts, but as one means of testing my own and others' relationship work against the reality of "lived experience."

Had I been more of a sociological and less of a psychological social psychologist, I might have considered conducting these informal interviews and observations in a sufficiently systematic fashion that I could treat them as codable data. Had I been more of a journalist and less of a social scientist, I might have attempted reporting my "findings" without too much concern for their formal adequacy (see, e.g., Brenton, 1974). As it turned out, these soft data served as a fund of ideas for identifying concepts to add to and round out the friendship model. Once identified, the each promising new concept was defined in a manner amenable to measurement in the format of the ADF.

The task of converting my informal observations into measurable concepts was greatly facilitated when I ventured beyond attraction research within mainstream social psychology and became acquainted with some of the friendship literature in allied disciplines, especially sociology and anthropology. Sociologist Suzanne Kurth (1970), for example, dealt with socially structured situations that, normative constraints notwithstanding, permit sufficient flexibility for amicable interaction. Her analysis provided a means of distinguishing conceptually between mere "friendly relations" and friendship as a relationship in its own right. Another sociologist, Gerald Suttles (1970), argued convincingly that friendship, because it is voluntary and largely free of social regulation, depends for its definition and existence upon the partners' perceptions of one another as unique and spontaneously responding individuals. A collection of anthropological studies and essays edited by Leyton (1974) demonstrated that friendship, in spite of its well-deserved reputation as a relatively role-free and norm-free relationship, is responsive to cultural demands and prohibitions such as the presence or absence of pre-emptive kinship obligations or taboos regulating social intercourse. Knowledge of such constraints alerted me to the possibility that some social and cultural settings are so rigidly structured that friendship, as an identifiable relationship, cannot thrive (but see Uhl, 1991, as cited above). Moreover, I was

alerted to the necessity of considering what is truly distinctive about friendship versus what friendship has in common with other personal relationships.

My overall approach, I thought, would keep the development of the friendship model on a sound empirical basis. Each new concept, whatever its source, was to be painstakingly defined and operationalized as a scale in the ADF. The concept would then be retained or eliminated depending upon whether its usefulness was borne out by systematic research.

It took me longer than it should have to recognize the arbitrariness inherent in this approach. During its early stages (although I was not aware of it until later), Levinger and Snoek (1972) specifically included my work in the following assessment: "Where authors have sought to depart from the operational constraints of the laboratory experiment, they seem to espouse an infinite multi-dimensionality that defies systematic conception" (p. 16). This was not an isolated judgment. Writing to me in his capacity as a journal editor, Secord (1972) noted that a comprehensive statement of the model seemed to be "more of a discussion of possible but not necessary aspects of relations between friends, with too heavy a reliance on operations not adequately based in a comprehensive concept of friendship." It was at this point that I started thinking in terms of developing a theory from which to derive --or with which to integrate-- the dimensions and variables specified in the friendship model.

From my perspective as a psychological social psychologist, it seemed only natural to look for the basis of a friendship theory in a conception of the behaving person. Moreover, the frequent use of self-referent variables in attraction research and the ubiquity of subjects' orienting references to their own self-attributes and self-processes in my informal interviews made it seem equally natural to seek that conception in the psychology of self. Accordingly, I undertook a broad survey of different approaches to the self and, relying heavily on social learning theory and symbolic interactionism, attempted to incorporate important concepts from each into a comprehensive framework (Wright, 1977). I then used this framework as the basis for a tentative theory of friendship (Wright, 1978). Plans for testing and refining the friendship theory were hardly underway before another conceptual problem surfaced. In a critical but even-handed overview, Davis & Todd (1982) noted that although the theory purported to be theory of friendship, it did not identify conceptually what was distinctive about the friendship relationship. Hence, it did not provide any analytical tools for distinguishing between friendship and other relationships, including romantic love. The point was well taken. After agonizing for a time over ways to respond to this deficit while leaving the theory unchanged, I carried the question back to the relationship literature and back to my everyday observations. I eventually added concepts that appeared to be essential for distinguishing among different kinds of relationships (Wright, 1985; Wright & Bergloff, 1984). Hence, the theory of friendship became a theory of personal relationships.

The Theory in Synopsis

The theory is based on a conception of the behaving person proposing that the normally developing individual acquires an occasionally explicit but ordinarily implicit awareness of her/his own physical distinctiveness, unity, continuity of existence, uniqueness, and initiative or causal power. Taken together, these elements of awareness constitute the entity that the individual identifies as her/his self. This self, once developed, is unitary and unchanging. As a

concept developed by the behaving person, it has no energy or impetus of its own. The energy and impetus reside in the behaving person. However, because the self serves as a ubiquitous reference point for her/his experience and behavior, the individual develops and maintains a concern for its worth and well-being. Therefore, having a conception of her/his self as an identifiable entity has motivational consequences for the behaving person.

In addition to developing a conception of self as an identifiable entity, the individual comes to ascribe to the self a variety of attributes that, taken together, comprise her/his conception of what the self is like, i.e., her/his "identity." The individual's expression and maintenance of the more important of these self attributes usually has implications for the worth and well-being of the self as a whole. At the same time, some of them change over time and with varying experiences. In fact, people are generally socialized to desire and expect growth and elaboration of their self-attributes to the point that such growth itself has implications for the worth and well-being of the self as a whole. Thus, the combination of attributes constituting the individual's conception of what his or her self is like generally shows a balance of stability and orderly change. Moreover, many self attributes are expressed in some contexts but not others, depending upon their situational relevance. Therefore, the person's conception of what her or his self is like is neither unchanging nor highly unified.

The concern for the worth and well-being of the entity one identifies as self takes the form of five behavioral tendencies that function as self-referent motives. That is, the individual will behave in ways that 1) maintain and, if necessary, reaffirm her/his sense of individuality, 2) affirm or reaffirm her/his important self-attributes, 3) lead to the most positive assessments of self in situations that either encourage or compel self-evaluation, 4) promote changes in self-attributes in the direction of growth and positive elaboration, and 5) avoid or neutralize situations or events that threaten the worth or well-being of the self. This set of self-referent motives constitutes the linkage between the individual's conception of self and other aspects of her/his experience and behavior, including her/his personal relationships.

From the standpoint of structure, self-referent motivation is related to the individual's involvement in a personal relationship as follows. A relationship may be considered personal, as opposed to impersonal or merely social, to the degree that the partners involved show a personalized interest in and concern for one another, i.e., to the degree that they are mutually involved in non-obligatory interaction and respond to one another as unique, genuine and irreplaceable in the relationship. Due to this combination of characteristics, a strong personal relationship provides one way, perhaps the most important way, in which a person may find affirmation for her/his sense of individuality. In addition to this basic asset, individuals may find personal relationships rewarding because their partners provide one or more of the following benefits or "relationship values:" self-affirmation value, ego support value, stimulation value, security value, and utility value. Each of these benefits is coordinate with a specific self-referent motive except utility value. Rather than facilitating the fulfillment of any particular self-referent motive, utility value represents a tangible way in which relationship partners frequently express a more global personalized interest and concern.

Besides varying in the degree to which they provide self-referent rewards, personal relationships vary in the degree to which they are difficult to maintain. That is, they vary in the

degree to which they are marked by chronic or periodic tension and strain requiring special adjustive efforts or tolerance by one or both partners to sustain the viability of the relationship. The sources of such strain may be internal or external to the relationship. Both sources of strain are related, albeit in different ways, to the high level of interdependence that is one benchmark of a close relationship. Internally, a high level of interdependence increases the likelihood of episodic clashes of goals or motives, and heightens the necessity of adjusting to potentially annoying traits or mannerisms in one's partner. Externally, maintaining an adequate level of interdependence itself may be impeded by any number of factors such as long distances, forced separations, conflicting schedules, or social disapproval of the relationship. Thus, relational partners may experience maintenance difficulty as either personal or situational, regarding the former as stemming from the behavior or characteristics of one's partner and the latter from external forces beyond the control of either partner.

Finally, different kinds of relationships vary widely with respect to what the individual expects from them and what (s)he recognizes as her or his obligations and commitments to them. These differing expectations are strongly influenced by definitions and standards established within the broader social milieu. Ginsburg (1986; 1988), for example, described primary relationships as social and cultural categories, and highlighted the potency of culturally shared rules, scripts and prototypes in determining how such relationships are conducted. In effect, individuals in any given society have an array of potential social and personal relationships ready-made for them. For any particular person, arriving at a recognition of the different kinds of relationships that are available, as well as the proper ways of conducting them, is a matter of the socialization of the individual. The specific ways in which the person actually experiences and conducts such relationships is a matter of individualization of the social. The present theory specifies four dimensions along which different kinds of relationships vary as people experience them on a day to day basis. These are exclusiveness, permanence, degree of social regulation, and salience of emotional expression.

Nature of the Theory and its Niche in the Relationship Field

In its present form, the theory may be characterized as a functional anatomy of personal relationships. This status is an outgrowth of my originally limited intention to develop a set of dependent variables for friendship research. Most of the empirical work to date has dealt with structure rather than process, and has focused upon the experiences of individuals in relationships rather than upon dyads per se. However, the underlying formulation giving definition and coherence to the structural concepts emphasizes dynamic and developmental processes with respect to both the self and personal relationships. The individual's involvement in a relationship qua relationship, for example, is assumed to take on the characteristics of a self-attribute (see Wright, 1977; 1978; 1984). Therefore, the theory is compatible with --in fact, insists upon-- the view that personal relationships are ongoing processes resulting in emergent relational qualities that cannot be understood apart from a dyadic focus on the part of the persons involved.

Due to its current structural focus, the theory is most applicable to the assessment and exploration of characteristics of personal relationships at a given point in time. As such, it is well suited for comparative studies of relationships, i.e., the investigation of similarities and

differences among different types of relationships with respect to their strength or intensity, the kinds and degrees of rewards they provide, the degree to which they are difficult to maintain, and some of the broader expectations and obligations individuals recognize as inherent in them. Examples of this application include comparisons among marriage, engagement, cohabitation, steady dating, and same- and cross-gender friendship as well as comparisons between women's and men's friendships. In a similar vein, the theory provides a framework for delineating distinctive features of relationships within specialized subgroups or settings. Examples include friendships of physically handicapped individuals with able-bodied and with similarly handicapped acquaintances, relationships of elderly widows with friends and with grown children, relationships of adolescents with age-mates and with parents, friendships of pastors, and friendships of same- and cross-gender colleagues in work environments. Chapter 5 discusses such comparative applications in some detail.

Until recently, my assessment of my own theory in terms of its potential for understanding relationships was, I believe, overly modest. Because the bulk of the empirical work to date has been correlational rather than experimental, I have tended to think of the yield as "merely" definitional and descriptive, and in no sense causal and predictive. The theory would be truly sound and "valuable" (I thought) only when experimental or quasi-experimental research had reliably established a set of conceptually defined conditions affecting the different relationship variables. However, Bochner's (1989; 199?) commentary kindled the conviction that, scientific convention notwithstanding (e.g., Kelley, et al., 1983), "definitional and descriptive" and "causal and predictive" are not the only choices in relationship research. Analyses may also be interpretive and evocative. Therefore, establishing typical profiles of different kinds of relationships not only describes what those relationships are like, it also delineates and clarifies what we can expect from them, and suggests varying possibilities for participating in them. Recently, I have applied techniques based on the theory to generating profiles at the level of individual relationships (Wright & Wright, 1991). Such profiles have been used on a limited basis in relationship counseling. Indeed, research subjects often claim to have arrived at a clearer understanding of a particular relationship as a result of merely responding to questionnaire items measuring the relationship variables (cf. Rubin & Mitchell, 1976).

With its emphasis upon relationship structure and interpersonal states, the present theory contributes only indirectly to the study of relationship processes. It may, however, provide a useful conceptual meeting ground for approaches emphasizing structure vis-à-vis those emphasizing process. In the following two chapters, I will expand on the dynamic processes that I consider central to the theory, and assume to underlie the relationship variables. In brief, both the attributes that constitute the individual's conception of what his or her self is like and the characteristics of any given dyadic relationship change over time. Ordinarily, these changes are sufficiently orderly and gradual that both the conception of self and the characteristics of the relationship are relatively stable, although by no means static. Thus, whereas it is appropriate and useful to assess both self-referent concepts and relationship qualities at a given point in time, it is not appropriate to conceptualize either as fixed entities affecting, but not affected by, the other. Baxter (1991) provided a strong statement concerning this latter point.

Following Bahktin, Baxter labeled her position a "dialogical" approach and identified

five "false unities" researchers typically endorse in the study of personal relationships. Although each of these false unities is relevant here, just one --the false unity of Self-- will suffice to illustrate the compatibility of the present theory with an emphasis on relational processes. According to Baxter (1991), relationship scholars adopt a false unity by conceptualizing the "Self as an intact unity that is formed before entering the relationship and hence is brought into the relationship" and the relationship growth process as "the mutual revelation of two intact Selves" (p. 4). She proposes instead that "the relationship growth process is not a negotiation of unitary Selves but rather a process in which Selves are co-constructed by the relationship parties" (p. 5).

While agreeing with Baxter that relational selves are in an important sense "co-constructed" via the relationship process, the present theory does not assume that these co-constructed selves are infinitely malleable. Relationships are not, for example, inaugurated by individuals who are initially devoid of conceptions of their respective selves. The nature of these initial selves not only influences the development of the relationship, but also has a strong bearing on whether a relationship will develop at all. Of course, as the relationship develops (assuming that it does), the partners' selves will change as well, usually in a gradual and orderly fashion. Thus, I believe this approach offers a conception of self and relationships that accommodates Baxter's emphasis upon the co-construction of selves. More broadly, I believe it provides, if not a point of integration, at least an area of fruitful dialogue toward combining the emphases upon relationship structure and
relational process.

Plan for the Remainder of the Book

In outlining a synopsis the theory and locating its place in the field of personal relationships, I have summarized much of what will be covered in detail in the chapters that follow. In that summary, I alluded briefly to my rationale for basing my theory of relationships on a set of propositions about the psychology of self. However, self psychology is neither the only nor the most common approach to the nature of the behaving person in relationship research and theorizing. Therefore, for a full perspective, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the major ways in which approaches to understanding the person have been incorporated into relationship work. This overview includes a commentary on the applicability or shortfall of each approach to my particular task. With this overview as a backdrop, Chapter 3 details my perspective on the psychology of self. In adopting this view of self, I felt compelled to take a workable stand on several controversies, a process that involved considering different viewpoints, numerous details, and a bit of old history. Chapter 3 presents a functional anatomy of personal relationships built primarily on that perspective. Chapter 4 describes the measurement of the relationship variables by means of the Acquaintance Description Form (ADF), including descriptions of different versions of this instrument that may be used for specialized purposes. Chapter 5 examines a variety of relationships, including some comparisons among them, from the perspective of the present theory and measurement approach. Finally, Chapter 6 considers some of the broader implications and potential applications of the theory within the field of personal relationships as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTIONS OF THE PERSON IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Whys and Wherefores of a Focus on Persons

Personal relationships inevitably involve persons.

This obvious point raises a question. Can we really understand anything important about personal relationships without first giving serious and thorough consideration to the nature of the persons who participate in them? Can we, in other words, produce sound and useful research on personal relationships without basing that research on reasonably detailed and well-articulated models of the behaving person?

The answer is a rather resounding, "Yes. We can." To answer otherwise would be tantamount to claiming that many, perhaps most, relationship studies are unsound and useless. Many kinds of questions about personal relationships can be addressed without looking in depth or detail at human nature, basic motivation, or individual personalities. Much of the work focuses upon states, events, and processes within relationships themselves as well as upon various social and structural circumstances surrounding relationships. The nature of the behaving person is bypassed, assumed, dealt with globally, or otherwise left unspecified. To mention only a few examples, studies of social support, communication processes, or normative influences on relationships are generally conducted with little or no direct reference to what it is about people that makes social support or communication processes important to them, or what it is about them that makes them responsive to normative influences. Please understand that this is not a criticism of the field. It is, rather, recognition that one need not focus conceptually on the individual to contribute valuable work on personal relationships. As some now forgotten sage once observed, "One researcher's problem is another researcher's error variance."

This is not to say that the field as a whole minimizes, much less ignores, the nature of the person. Numerous scholars devote their best efforts to exploring the psychological underpinnings of personal relationships. I will describe some of these efforts in due course. First, however, let us deal with another question: If we can arrive at a conceptual grasp of personal relationships without looking in depth or detail at "human nature," why did I take pains to develop a conception of the behaving person as a foundation for my own work? The answer is, quite simply, that while many interesting questions about personal relationships can be addressed apart from an overall conception of the person, many other questions cannot. It so happens that the questions I am most interested in cannot. Humility forces me to admit that it took a long time and some direct criticism to face this fact. For the first seven or so years of my research, I doggedly explored the strength and rewardingness of friendships without a clearly (or even unclearly) articulated set of propositions about what people were like that made the characteristics I was studying important, or even relevant. For example, my research indicated that people did not consider an acquaintance a close friend unless that acquaintance showed a personalized interest in and concern for them. However, I had nothing to say about why people considered this personalized interest and concern important. In addition, studies of my list of interpersonal rewards or "relationship values" showed that at least one --but usually more -- of

these values was predictably present in even moderately strong relationships. But was my list the "right" one? Or the only one? What assumptions was I making about persons and their motives by concentrating on these particular relationship values? And how were these values related to the personalized interest and concern that seemed basic to the definition of a personal relationship?

In short, the concepts I was using were not well integrated, and my choices of which characteristics were worth investigating appeared to be arbitrary. Eventually, as I noted in the previous chapter, some of my colleagues (Levinger & Snoek, 1972; Secord, 1972) helped convince me that these concepts would continue to be unintegrated and seemingly arbitrary until I succeeded in basing my relationship work on a reasonably clear and differentiated conception of the person.

Conceptions of the Person: An Embarrassment of Riches?

In one sense, finding a broad conception of the person to serve as a foundation for a theory of relationships should not be difficult. We need only turn to psychology to find at least a half dozen potentially applicable models ready made for us. As a brief reminder, let us take a "Cook's tour" through some of the more prominent of these models.

An investigator might find it useful to rely on the psychodynamic approach and think of persons as bundles of irresistible motives that are mostly unconscious and usually not very nice. Such an approach might lead one to interpret adults' personal relationships as symbolic re-runs of what the partners experienced with their parents and siblings in early childhood. As an alternative to "symbolic re-runs," some scholars might prefer to conceptualize individuals' social and interpersonal needs in terms of enduring motives they acquire through the developmental process. Others may think it better to emphasize the humanistic point of view and treat individuals as basically rational, good-hearted creatures who, under decent conditions of existence, seek to maximize their own potential in ways that benefit not only themselves, but other people as well. Still others might espouse a straightforward reinforcement stance by emphasizing individuals' non-rational responses to contingencies of reward and (in some theories) punishment involving other people, or by emphasizing automatically learned associations between their positive or negative experiences and whatever particular people happen to be present when those experiences occur. Other theorists might see fit to convert the reinforcement approach into a more complex economic or "resource exchange" model by viewing people as rational and self-serving beings who, either explicitly or implicitly, calculate probable rewards and costs before taking action, including actions involved in forming, maintaining, and evaluating relationships. Or one might choose to concentrate on individuals' awareness and knowledge of themselves as distinct physical, psychological and social entities and the implications of this "self-identity" for their interpersonal experience and behavior.

Each of the foregoing approaches, along with several not mentioned, has found a place in one form or another in the study of interpersonal attraction and personal relationships. Psychodynamic theory, for example, formed the basis of early studies by Winch (1958) on the need complementarity hypothesis, and is represented in the contemporary work of Lillian Rubin (1983; 1985; 1986) on love and friendship. As another example, both Lott & Lott (1974) and

Byrne and his associates (see, e.g., Clore & Byrne, 1974) applied an essentially classical form of reinforcement theory to analyses of positive and negative interpersonal attitudes.

Current Emphases in Relationship Studies

On the contemporary scene, relationship researchers working from a psychological base most often adopt one of three orientations. These orientations emphasize, respectively, resource exchange, individual differences in personality needs or styles, and the self or self-related phenomena. I will now undertake a summary and brief commentary on these three approaches as a background for explaining in detail my own particular perspective on the psychology of self. Please bear in mind that judgments concerning which orientation provides the best foundation for a theory of relationships will vary depending upon what one is trying to accomplish with her or his particular theory. My own quest was for a conception of the person with sufficient breadth and comprehensiveness to integrate a multivariate model of relationships.

<u>Exchange, Equity, and Investment Theories</u>.

<u>Exchange theory</u>. Currently, the approach most in vogue among relationship scholars is exchange theory or one of its variants. The version of exchange theory most often cited in relationship work originated with Thibaut & Kelley (1959). Since its introduction, the theory has been elaborated somewhat to effect an increasingly "personal" emphasis (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley, 1979), and it has been ably reviewed and critiqued a number of times (see, e.g., La Gaipa, 1977; Shaw & Costanzo, 1982).

Exchange theory starts with a loose translation of reinforcement terms from learning theory into the rewards obtained and costs incurred by each member of an interacting dyad. That is, dyadic interactions are assumed to involve exchanges of various levels and kinds of resources. Individuals form and maintain relationships on the basis of their perception or anticipation of the most favorable reward-cost balance available to them.

If human existence were both ideal and simple, people might be able to calculate rewards and costs in absolute terms. If this were the case, we would expect individuals to form and maintain only those relationships in which their (experienced or anticipated) rewards far exceeded their costs. Moreover, the more the rewards exceeded the costs, the more satisfied the person should be with a relationship, and the more strongly committed to preserving it. Conversely, we would expect that they would either avoid or be dissatisfied with and terminate relationships in which the costs exceeded the rewards.

However, human existence is neither ideal nor simple. Rather than calculating reward-cost balances in absolute terms, people establish <u>comparison levels</u> for their relationships, i.e., internal standards or expectations concerning reward-cost balances that are adequate or acceptable. They also establish <u>comparison levels for alternatives</u>, i.e., expectations concerning the reward-cost balance they would experience in other relationships they are not currently involved in, but that they perceive as being available to them. One's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a relationship, then, depends upon whether the reward-cost balance equals or exceeds her or his comparison level. One's commitment to a relationship, however, depends

upon her or his comparison level for alternatives, i.e, whether (s)he would experience a more favorable reward-cost balance in a different relationship. Thus, being satisfied or dissatisfied with a relationship is not the same as remaining committed to it. One might, for example, be satisfied with a relationship but decide to abandon it in favor of one providing an even more favorable reward-cost balance. Or one might be dissatisfied with a relationship yet remain committed to it if there were no alternative relationships available providing a more favorable (or less unfavorable) reward-cost balance. In this basic form, the exchange approach may be characterized in the vernacular as a "best deal" theory.

Equity theory. In an elaboration of the basic exchange approach, equity theory (Walster, Berscheid & Walster, 1973, 1976; Hatfield & Traupmann, 1981) proposes that each participant in a dyadic relationship monitors not only her/his own inputs (costs) and outcomes (rewards), but those of her/his partner as well. Rather than being concerned solely with a favorable reward-cost balance for her/himself, each person is concerned that outcomes are proportional to inputs for both her/himself and her/his partner. In other words, either partner who contributes a lot to the relationship by way of effort or resources should get a lot from it by way of rewards or advantages. Conversely, either partner who contributes little to the relationship should get correspondingly little from it.

An individual considers a relationship equitable if, in her/his estimation, the ratio of her/his outcomes and inputs and those of her/his partner are about equal. If (s)he perceives these ratios to differ, (s)he will consider the relationship inequitable. Inequity may take one of two forms: an individual may consider her/himself under-benefited (perceive her/his own outcome/input ratio to be lower than that of her/his partner) or over-benefited (i.e., perceive her/his own ratio to be higher than that of her/his partner). The perception of equity contributes to an individual's satisfaction with a relationship and her/his commitment to it. To put it negatively, a person in an inequitable relationship will be dissatisfied with it and perhaps consider dissolving it. In cases where dissolving the relationship is prohibitively difficult, the partner perceiving inequity is likely to stay in it, but use various tactics to establish or restore equity. A description of these tactics, which differ markedly depending upon whether the person considers her/himself over- or under-benefited, is not particularly relevant to this overview.

It is important to note that equity theory augments rather than replaces basic exchange theory. Equity theory, too, assumes that individuals seek to maximize their outcomes. The concern with equity does not occur apart from the overall rewardingness of relationships. In other words, equity considerations are relevant only within relationships otherwise providing the individual with an acceptable reward-cost balance. Failure to make this stipulation would lead to the untenable conclusion that a person would be satisfied with and committed to a relationship in which (s)he experienced minimal rewards at excessive costs as long as (s)he was convinced that her/his partner was experiencing rewards and costs at similarly low and high levels. Given this stipulation, however, equity may be considered a "fair shake" rather than a "best deal" theory. People are not necessarily happiest in relationships giving them the best deal, they are happiest in those giving both themselves and their partners a fair shake.

Investment theory. Yet another elaboration of exchange theory adds the concept of investments to those of rewards and costs (Rusbult, 1983). Investments are expenditures of

resources that are intrinsic to a given relationship, or that have become inextricably tied to it. Investments include such things as the time and emotional effort devoted to developing and maintaining the relationship, relationally significant gifts given to one's partner, or "common property" representing expenditures by both partners (e.g., purchasing a house and furniture or cultivating mutual friends). Investments differ from simple costs in that, once expended, the resources continue to draw a dividend. Each partner, for example, continues to enjoy the house (s)he helped buy or the emotional meaning of the personal gifts (s)he gave the other or the mutual friendships (s)he helped cultivate. If the relationship were to end, such rewards would cease and the investment would, in effect, be foreclosed. In the case of costs, the resources expended in or on the relationship are actually "spent," and thus represent a loss to the contributing partner regardless of the continuity of the relationship. Suppose, for example, that years ago my wife passed up a genuine opportunity to marry a man far richer, brighter, and better looking than I in order (for whatever reason) to marry me. Or suppose that, since our marriage, she decided forego a similar opportunity to dump me, opting to stick with our marriage instead. If such had been the case, marrying me --or staying with me-- cost her something, and the cost represented a loss (foregone opportunity) that would not be worsened if our marriage eventually failed. In fact, the termination of our marriage might mean regaining the earlier opportunity and hence constitute an <u>alternative</u> in the "basic exchange" sense.

Investment theory, like exchange theory, calculates one's satisfaction with a relationship in terms of the balance of rewards and costs. Commitment, however, is calculated in terms of satisfaction, alternatives, and investments. Let us assume, for example, that an individual is moderately satisfied with a relationship due to a relatively high level of rewards and a relatively low level of costs. Let us further assume that this individual perceives that (s)he has one (or more) attractive alternative(s). From the viewpoint of basic exchange theory, this individual's commitment to the relationship would be quite weak. From the viewpoint of investment theory, however, it is necessary to add her or his investments. A high level of investments would increase the individual's commitment, i.e. reduce likelihood that (s)he will terminate the relationship. A low level of investments would have the opposite effect. Thus, under some circumstances, the expenditure of resources serves to strengthen rather than weaken relationships, and to contribute to their permanence. Investment theory, then, represents an "in too deep to quit" approach to relationship maintenance.

Given my goal of developing a sufficiently broad and differentiated conception of the person to integrate a ready made multivariate model of relationships, I have not found exchange theory in any of its variations useful. Contrary to what a number of colleagues have suggested -- mostly privately and informally-- I have no quarrel with a focus on resource exchange, nor with the concept of reinforcement. In fact, my own work has been characterized, not inaccurately, as involving a partial emphasis on resource exchange (Roberto, 1989). Moreover, it will become clear from my later analysis of the acquisition of self-attributes that I am convinced of the power of reinforcement in individual development and behavior.

The short-fall of exchange theory from my perspective is its persistent failure to incorporate a systematic analysis of rewards and/or costs. As commentaries consistently note (see, e.g., Aron & Aron, 1986; La Gaipa, 1977; Shaw & Costanzo, 1982), current statements of exchange theory do not provide a means of identifying conceptually or substantively what constitutes various

rewards and costs. Rewards and costs are specified on an ad hoc, study-by-study basis, leaving the definition of both open-ended and potentially arbitrary. As Murstein (1983) put it, "everything is rewarding and exchange is everywhere" (p. 4). In the face of the persistence of such observations, it is puzzling to me that exchange advocates have not taken pains to integrate into their theory some readily available model of rewards or resources such as that developed by Foa & Foa (1980). As it stands, however, exchange theory is similar to what one hears about the Powder River in Montana and Wyoming, i.e., a mile wide and an inch deep. As such, it fails to deal in a theoretically useful way with a question that is central to my own as well as a number of others' relationship work: what is it that people find reinforcing (rewarding) in their personal relationships? Apart from the foregoing conceptual gap, there are a number of reasons for questioning the generality, if not the fundamental applicability, of the postulated exchange processes in personal relationships. Do people generally, as a matter of course, form and maintain relationships with an explicit or implicit sensitivity to what they are getting out of it compared to what they are contributing to it? The work of Murstein and his associates suggests not (see, e.g., Murstein, McDonald & Cerreto, 1977). Rather, there are some people who have an exchange orientation and others who do not. Thus, an overarching concern with a favorable reward-cost balance in relationships is a matter of individual differences, not a generally applicable principle. Do participants in relationships generally, as a matter of course, keep track of their own and their partners' costs (inputs) and rewards (outcomes)? The work of Clark and her associates suggests not (see, e.g., Clark, 1984; Clark, Mills & Powell, 1986). Rather, some (but by no means all) relationships are conducted along exchange lines, meaning that comparative costs and rewards are a prime consideration. Other relationships, however, are conducted along communal lines, meaning that each partner is attuned to benefiting the other without considering reciprocation. Benefits are offered when one's partner has a need for them, or would be especially pleased with them. Finally, do people generally, as a matter of course, maintain a mental file of potential relationships to consider as alternatives if they appear to offer more favorable reward-cost balances than the relationships they are currently maintaining? My own informal observations and off-the-cuff interviews, spanning approximately 15 years, suggest not. Rarely has a conception of alternatives surfaced spontaneously in my unwitting subjects' ruminations about their relationships. More to the point, recent research by Miller & Simpson (1991) indicates that subjects who are satisfied with their romantic relationships appear to be neither interested in nor cognizant of alternatives.

Individual Differences in Needs and Styles

Interpersonal needs. Psychologists have long been interested in individual differences in the way people approach --or avoid-- personal relationships, and in the way they behave in them. When Murray (1938) proposed a list of psychogenic needs for assessing variations in personality, a number of those needs were intrinsically interpersonal, e.g., the needs for affiliation, dominance, succorance, nurturance. Years later, at the beginning of the sociopsychological boom in the study of attraction, Schutz (1958) proposed that individuals vary in their interpersonal relationships with respect to three fundamental orientations, i.e., inclusion, affection, and control. In contemporary relationship work, the emphasis upon personal needs finds perhaps its most prominent expression in the work of McAdams (1980; 1983; 1985; 1988).

McAdams (1985) defined a motive as "a recurrent preference or readiness for a particular quality of experience" (p. 86). He proposed that two such motives are fundamental in personal relationships, i.e., the need for intimacy and the need for power. These needs refer to a recurrent preference or readiness for, respectively, "warm, close, and communicative exchange with others," and "experiences of feeling strong and having an impact upon one's world" (p. 87). The fact that these needs bear a striking conceptual similarity to Schutz's affection and control orientations (which he, also, called "fundamental") does perhaps attest to their basic character.

McAdams' position originated in his effort to gain conceptual and operational clarity on the need for affiliation (McAdams, 1980), a concept that is quite similar to the third of Schutz's orientations, i.e., inclusion. Findings from this effort led McAdams into an empirical and theoretical search that culminated in his current concentration on intimacy and power. McAdams sees these two needs as specific expressions of two more broadly integrative themes that characterize ways in which human beings relate to their material and non-social as well as their social envoironments. Following Bakan (1966), he labels these themes communion and agency. Communion refers to the individual's tendency to merge with others and with her/his surrounds, and to downplay her/his individuality through contact, openness, and cooperation. Agency refers to the individual's tendency to separate from others, to master and control her/his surrounds, and to express and expand her/his sense of self.

Individual intimacy and power motivation are assessed by means of content analyses of imaginative stories that subjects produce in response to a standard set of ambiguous pictures. Research utilizing these measures reveals that the needs for intimacy and power are differentially related to the quality of subjects' involvement in personal relationships, particularly friendships. Subjects who scored high on intimacy motivation, for example, were found to emphasize dyadic rather than larger group interaction with their friends, to gravitate toward the role of listener, to indicate high levels of self disclosure (McAdams, Jackson & Kirshnit, 1984), and to regard intimate self disclosure as signaling a deepening relationship with a friend (McAdams, 1984). In contrast, subjects who scored high on power motivation were found to emphasize group rather than one-to-one interaction with friends, to adopt an active, controlling stance in the interaction, and to assume a helping role, presumably because helping represents a way of establishing assertiveness in the friendship (McAdams, Healy & Kraus, 1984). Moreover, subjects with high power motivation associated growing closer in friendship with instances in which one friend was able to help or "rescue" the other (McAdams, 1984). A study of fourth- and sixth-grade pupils (McAdams & Losoff, 1984), suggested that children's friendships may be related to the need for intimacy, in the more specific form of "friendship motivation," in a manner similar to that typically found for young adults.

Attachment styles and love styles. Two other highly visible approaches to the study of individual differences in personal relationships conceptualize and measure, respectively, attachment styles and love styles. These approaches focus upon modes of relating rather than personality needs as traditionally defined. The theoretical and empirical work on attachment styles and personal relationships developed primarily as an extension of attachment theory based on the study of infant development (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969; 1973; 1980). Shaver and his associates (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1988; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988) capitalized upon the rich yield of findings and concepts from studies of infant attachment

to identify the content and presumed source of three characteristic patterns of responding to close relationships in adulthood. Following the terminology of attachment theory, they labeled these patterns of responding (attachment styles) as secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. The first of these styles is typified by comfortable, untroubled participation in close relationships, and an easy acceptance of mutual dependence between one's self and one's partner. The anxious/ambivalent style is typified by a desire for merging with others in close relationships coupled with a fear of rejection or abandonment. The avoidant style is typified by discomfort with close relationships and difficulty in trusting or becoming dependent upon one's partner. As of this writing, the assessment of attachment styles has most often involved presenting subjects with brief thumbnail sketches epitomizing each of the three attachment styles, and asking them to select the one best describing their feelings and experiences. Studies using this technique consistently show that varying attachment styles are related in predictable ways to subjects' experiences in close relationships (see, especially, Hazan & Shaver,1987). More recently, newlywed couples in which both partners endorsed the secure style showed better overall adjustment that those in which one or both partners endorsed either of the other two styles (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). In a provocative possibility for future research, Bartholomew (1990) proposed a four-fold typology of adult attachment that retains the secure style, but divides the anxious/ambivalent style into pre-occupied and fearful, and re-names the avoidant style dismissing.

The concept of individual love styles in romantic relationships evolved from a typology originally developed by Lee (1973). Lee proposed that different types of love, like different colors, exist in the form of primaries and compounds. The primary types are eros, ludus, and storge. As a "pure type," eros involves strong emotional and physical attraction, and open expressions of love between the partners. Ludus involves a playful enjoyment of the "game" of love characterized, in part, by a lack of serious commitment and often multiple partners. Storge involves well-developed familiarity and a comfortable, usually unexciting, friendliness and reciprocal caring. The three major compounds are mania, pragma, and agape. Mania involves an intense emotional preoccupation with one's partner that is sometimes painful and ambivalent, and often marked by a fear that one's love is not or will not continue to be reciprocated. Pragma involves the practical consideration of whether there is a compatibility between one's self and one's partner with respect to needs, interests, and goals that bodes well for long-term contentment and stability in the relationship. Agape involves a selfless devotion to the care and well-being of one's partner with little or no thought of return or reciprocation.

According to his own claims, Lee does not consider these types of love, singly or in various mixtures, to reflect "organismic," personality, or individual difference variables per se (see, especially, Lee, 1988). Rather, he considers them historical and ideological in content, emphasizing that the typology is a typology of relationships, not a typology of persons. To the degree that this claim is accurate, Lee's types are more akin to the rules, roles and scripts proposed by Ginsburg (1988) than to individual attitudes or personal predilections. However, his specific application of the types appears to be contradict his claim. He does, in other words, consistently refer to the predilections and preferences of individuals. In any case, while retaining the names and definitions of the six basic types, later investigators have treated them explicitly as dispositional variables. Lasswell & Lobsenz (1980), for example, developed a questionnaire using a multiple choice format to measure individuals' love styles. More recently, Hendrick &

Hendrick (1986), introduced a technique utilizing a Likert-type response format that yields, a profile of an individual's loved attitudes. Hendrick & Hendrick's Love Attitude Scale is probably the best known and most widely used technique for exploring love styles in current relationship studies. Accumulating research on love styles, like that on attachment styles, continues to support its usefulness as an approach to understanding individual differences in close relationships (see, e.g., Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987, 1988; Hendrick, Hendrick & Alder, 1988).

By way of general comment, the assumption that we can understand something important about personal relationships by examining the enduring needs, motives, styles, or attitudes of the particular individuals participating in them is intuitively meaningful as well as empirically documented. When the "person on the street" assays a judgment about how two erstwhile unacquainted persons might get along --or about what seems to be happening between individuals in an ongoing relationship-- (s)he almost automatically bases that judgment on the kinds of persons they are. And so, by the way, do most relationship scholars when they are "off duty." Thus, one cannot gainsay the empirical and theoretical usefulness of exploring the interrelatedness of individual difference variables and personal relationships. But once again, my own quest was for a more comprehensive integrative scheme. In this regard, the individual differences approach, like exchange theory, was not particularly helpful, but for a different reason.

Simply put, neither the range nor the substantive content of the variables specified in current individual differences approaches provided a suitable match for the kinds of relationship rewards that I had found useful in the "pre-theoretical" versions of my relationship model. The earliest version of that model, for example, identified three such rewards (relationship values), i.e., utility value, ego support value, and stimulation value. These values differ from one another in content, and none of them are addressed directly by the orientations reviewed above. Apart from this, by focusing upon relational behavior as a function of the characteristic of the person, the individual differences approach cannot readily accommodate either situational influences or differences within a given individual from one relationship to the next. This is not to say that any of the orientations reviewed maintain that an individual behaves rigidly according to one set of needs or styles, nor that individuals do not change. On the contrary, they emphatically affirm that individuals do respond differently in different kinds of situations, and that characteristic ways of responding change over time. In a sense, however, this disclaimer is beside the point. In specific studies or applications, relational behavior is taken to be an outcome or a correlate of the set of needs or styles under consideration.

The Self and Self-related Concepts.

The status of the "self" in the contemporary study of personal relationships is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, self-related concepts abound in research. One finds, for example, relationship studies exploring such variables as self-esteem, self-disclosure, self-evaluation, self-consistency, self-definition, self-maintenance, self-enhancement, self-congruence, and self-perception. On the other hand, comprehensive models of the self have not had a great deal of prominence. There are exceptions, of course. Some of the symbolic interactionists (e.g., Davis, 19xx; McCall, 1974), for example, have made systematic conceptions of the self central in their analyses of close relationships. In an interesting departure from mainstream Western thought,

social psychologists Aron & Aron (1986) proposed a conception of self and relationships rooted in Vedic psychology. Finally, Tesser and his associates (e.g., Tesser & Campbell, 1985) developed a detailed model of Self-Evaluation Maintenance systems (SEMs) as a means of exploring important aspects of relationships. For the most part, however, investigators apply self-related concepts apart from the self viewed more broadly.

Inasmuch as I will cover various conceptions of the self in the following chapter, I will not go into further details at this point. Suffice it to say that I found some of the differing approaches to self psychology to be complementary rather than contradictory, and was able to include them to my own satisfaction as interrelated parts of a broader pattern.

CHAPTER 3

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELF

The Focus on Self Psychology

It will be clear by this time that much of my thinking about relationships was crystallized before I started considering a conception of persons. When the latter finally became a preoccupation with me, my model was, literally, seven variables in search of a theory. What may not yet be clear is why, in backing into individual psychology in general, I backed into self psychology in particular. There were three reasons for this. The first was the frequent use of self-related variables in relationship studies, as previously noted. The second was the ubiquity of orienting references to self from subjects in informal interviews following their participation in relationship studies as well as from unsuspecting conversational partners who did not know they were being interviewed. These two factors steered me in the direction of self psychology to begin with, and led to the third: once I became more aware of its various facets, self psychology appeared to offer a means of exploring both dispositional and situational influences in relationships, and accommodating both stability and orderly change.

The Field of Self Psychology and its Conundrums

Self psychology, as a area of academic inquiry, is similar to the field of personal relationships in that it claims the loose allegiance of scholars from a wide variety of disciplines. For this reason, the term self psychology is somewhat of a misnomer. Whereas many of its source disciplines are subfields of psychology, e. g., personality, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and social psychology, some of its strongest adherents come from the fields of sociology, psychiatry, and philosophy. Also like the field of personal relationships, self psychology is marked by a diversity of viewpoints and methodologies, hence several points of disagreement and ambiguity.

When I first attended seriously to conceptions of the self (Wright, 1977), my survey suggested that these points of disagreement and ambiguity centered around five questions.

Hindsight suggests that these five questions actually reduce readily to three, with the other two being either tangential or subsumed under the others. The three remaining questions are as follows: First, is the self active or passive? That is, is the self a causal agent that actually does things and makes things happen, or is the self a concept in the more literal sense, i.e., a passive object of knowledge on the part of a broader and more basic active entity? Second, is the self unitary or multiple? That is, does a given individual have (or exist as) one self, two selves, or many selves? In more concrete terms, does a given individual embody or express the same "self" from one situation or social context to the next, or does (s)he embody or express a number of different selves, depending upon variations in situations? Third, are different aspects of the self (or the different selves) highly integrated and internally consistent? Is every aspect of the self related to every other aspect via, for example, hierarchical organization, or do different aspects of the self function independently? The conception of self that follows was developed, in part, with these and similar questions in view.

A Conception of the Self and Self-referent Motivation

The Limited Task for the Present Theory

It ill behooves a person to knowingly disappoint her/his friends, even metaphorical ones. Therefore, lest any of my readers think that by reading this chapter they will be treated to a comprehensive coverage of self psychology, please be advised: the field is too detailed, wide-ranging, and richly nuanced to integrate, or even organize, in a single chapter. A number of excellent inclusive overviews are available including, for example, Wylie's classic two-volume work (Wylie, 1974; 1979) and Hattie's (1992) recent integrative review. My goal in formulating the present theory was to arrive at a limited but coherent set of self-referrent principles to serve, primarily, as a basis for integrating the various aspects of my relationship model and, secondarily, as a basis for conceptualizing both self-stabilty and self-change in personal relationships. Thus, there are many interesting and important aspects of the self that are overlooked or dealt with only by allusion. I make only fleeting reference, for example, to Erikson's (19xx) informative treatment of identity formation.

Historical Uses of Conceptions of the Self

In working out a rationale for my perspective, I found it useful to focus on what various self scholars were trying to accomplish with their inquiries rather than attempting to focus directly on what the self is "really like." Historically, scholars have used the concept of self for one of two broad purposes. One purpose has been to account for the coherence and continuity of individual experience and behavior, including acts of choosing. Earlier scholars adopting this purpose were not necessarily concerned with individual differences in self perceptions. The second purpose has been to account for the origins and the motivational, emotional, and behavioral consequences of the individual's perceptions of her or his own distinctive characteristics. My impression is that current self theorists, in rightly emphasizing the latter focus, have either forgotten or underrated the importance of the former. In organizing my own perspective on the self, I have found it crucial to keep both "uses" in view.

When I consider the first use, I feel myself to be on very old and hallowed ground. In the early 1800s, Maine de Biran (see Hallie, 1959)[1] proposed a theory of self as an alternative to British Empiricism and to the materialism and sensationism characterizing the French psychology of his time.   Maine de Biran started with the proposition that the individual person must exist as a unified and continuously existing "self" to account for the localization and orderly accumulation of the sensations that, according to the materialists, make up the human mind. This self, however, is not at first (i.e., as an infant) aware of its own existence. It gradually becomes aware of its existence when its own movements bring it into contact with the surrounding environment, particularly when the enviroment offers resistance to those movements. It is this resistance and the individual's consequent efforts to overcome it that give rise to effort voulu (voluntary effort) and, eventually, the will. Thus, Maine de Biran found the origins of the "will" in a rudimentary aspect of self, i.e., the individual's awareness that (s)he can exert effort and make things happen that would not happen if (s)he were to remain passive.

About a century later, Mary Whiton Calkins (1908; 1921; 1927) became the chief spokesperson for a sub-group of American functional psychologists who advocated a psychology of self as a corrective for what they regarded the disembodied approaches of structuralism and behaviorism. Calkins' views bore a striking similarity to those of de Biran, giving emphasis to the self as the unitary and continuous locus of the individual's experience.   Calkins further stressed the individuality of the self, but only in the sense that one's experiences were recognized as uniquely one's own. Calkins was not concerned, in other words, with one's self-perceived individuality as a configuration of traits making her/him a different kind of person from anyone else.

Little wonder that Calkins championed self psychology. Her mentor was William James, whose treatment of the self (James, 1890) is commonly regarded the point of departure for modern thinking on the topic. Calkins' views may be seen as an extension and application of the aspect of self that James identified variously as the "I," self as knower," or "pure ego." This is the active, continuous, and unified self that James associated with the continuity and unity of the individual's stream of consciousness. James also waxed eloquent on the fact that, once conscious of its own existence, the "I" will inevitably treat itself as an object, i.e., reflect upon its own existence and behavior. This inevitability gives rise to a more passive "me," or "self as known," or "empirical self" that includes a "material self," a "social self," and a "spiritual self." With this extension of having (or being) a self, James underscored the second use of the concept, i.e., to account for the emotional and motivational consequences of the individual's perception of her or his own particular characteristics.

It seems likely that James considered the "I" --the self as the unifier and integrator of experience-- as more basic than the "me," although one cannot be certain. (James had many virtues; consistency was not one of them). In either case, I believe that James, for all his

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[1]Although Maine de Biran wrote prolifically between 1802 and 1824, little of his work was published in his own lifetime. Most of his writings, very few of which have been translated from the French, are available in volumes of collected works (see, e.g., Tisserand, 1920-42).

brilliance and insight, did us a great disservice by labelling the "active, knowing, integrative" self as the "I," a convention continued by, among others, Mead (19xx). This convention creates confusion by implying that the active self ("I") is, like the passive self ("me"), phenomenally accessible to the person as a clear and definitive entity. The active-self-versus-passive-self conundrum stems, I believe, from the fact that even when we are treating self as an object, we refer to it as "I," not "me." When we are behaving spontaneously and unreflectively, we do not refer to self as "I," or as anything else; we simply behave. In other words, I see the conundrum as semantic rather than substantive and, in due course, will propose my own semantic solution.

Regardless of the aspect of self that James intended to emphasize, another self theorist of his era, J. Mark Baldwin (1897, 1913), and a vast majority of those who came later, stressed the social origins of the self and gave clear prominence to the individual's awareness of her or his distinctive characteristics. Baldwin (1913), for example, underscored the impact of the individual's unique social milieu, and epitomized the self as "a society individualized" (p. 131).

In contemporary self psychology, scholars are predominantly concerned with exploring the social and experiential sources of the individual's conception of her or his personal characteristics, and the psychological implications of that conception. The clear ascendance of this focus is well illustrated in Scheibe's (1985) sophisticated historical overview of the "presented self." Several theories representing this focus figure prominently in my analysis of the development of self-attributes and will be discussed later within that context.

This is not to say, of course, that a focus on the self as the locus of one's experience is totally ignored. It is present, for example, among developmental psychologists concerned with the genesis of self awareness in children (see, e.g., Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). Occasionally, one finds a blending of the two "uses" of the notion of self. Gordon Allport (1961), for example, conceptualized self development as progressing through seven stages, beginning with a "sense of bodily self" and culminating in "propriate striving." Although Allport did not differentiate, as I have chosen to, between two functions (uses) of the self, his first three stages fall into my first category and the last four into my second. My own overall analysis of the self, and several of the details, owe a great deal to Allport's contribution. My organization and terminology are different, but many of the Allportian ideas are there.

Two Hypothetical Situations and Two Basic Distinctions

My analysis begins with two distinctions that I believe are implicit in much of both historic and contemporary work on the self. Before dealing with these distinctions, however, I will describe two hypothetical situations involving the self and self-referent behavior that I believe will make the sense of the distinctions clearer. Subsequent sections will build upon these distinctions. In those later sections, I will elaborate upon the nature and development of the self as an identifiable entity, including a discussion of its basic motivational implications. Then I will elaborate upon the nature and development of self-attributes, including a discussion of specific self-referent motives. In the course of these discussions, I will address the third point of disagreement among self theorists, i.e., how well integrated and internally consistent is the self?

Hypothetical situation #1. Let us suppose that, without giving it much forethought, you settle down in an easy chair with your morning newspaper. You become engrossed in an editorial when you are startled by a loud noise that turns out to be an air hammer operated by a member of a street repair crew working outside your open window. After your heart stops pounding and your breathing returns to normal, you try to resume your reading. But the noise continues and, while no longer startling, proves distracting. You get up and shut the window to block out the sound, but it does not help --at least not enough. So you give up your easy chair and move to a different room. After a while, you get on with other matters, putting the whole annoying episode behind you.

Later, however, when recounting the events of the day to a friend, you may say something like this: "You know what? When I was reading the paper this morning, some worker started up an air hammer right outside my window. Nearly scared me out of my wits. I tried to keep on reading, but the noise was just too much, even when I closed the window. I finally had to move into the family room to finish the paper."

Notice that you used "I" and "me" as reference points --"I" for something you were doing, and "me" for something that happened to you. You did this explicitly and self-consciously when you were recounting the event, and implicitly and unself-consciously at the time of the original experience. In the recounting, you used "my" as a reference point for something you experienced as belonging to you, or as part of you --i.e., your "wits." Moreover, both in the recounting and in the original experience, you recognized --automatically and unreflectively-- that you could take self-initiated and self-directed action that might remedy your situation, i.e., you closed the window and, that failing, you moved to another room.

At its simplist (but it does get complex), this is how the self operates. Although the self is passive (has no energy or impetus of its own), it is the cognitive mechanism enabling the person to localize her/his experience and behavior, and giving that experience and behavior coherence and continuity. The important motivational implications of having a conception of one's self will become clear in due course.

Hypothetical situation #2. Let us suppose again. This time, let us suppose that your favorite charitable organization has decided to raise some money by putting on an amateur talent show, letting tickets go for a contribution of $5.00 or more. You are asked to sing a solo. You have a pretty good singing voice, but you decline. You realize that you are not much of a show person --you have no stage presence and really do not enjoy performing in front of audiences. However, you pride yourself on being well-organized, and you are fairly adept at coordinating the efforts of people working behind the scenes. So you volunteer to oversee advance publicity and the printing and distribution of tickets. In addition, you deem it both a privilege and a responsibility to support worthy causes and to help others in times of need. Therefore, because you consider the talent show part of a worthwhile cause, you make a sizable (and anonymous) donation to offset some of the preliminary expenses.

Your evaluation of the opportunities presented by this episode, as well as your responses to them, depended largely upon your awareness of some of your personal characteristics --what you are good at and not so good at, what you do and do not like to do, and what you deem

important to express about yourself by taking direct action. You do not see yourself as an adept performer. You are not concerned about this, it is just the way you are. However, you do see yourself as an effective organizer, and consider the project an excellent opportunity to put this personal quality to good use. In fact, you would probably feel "not quite right" about yourself if you let the opportunity pass without at least offering to do so. Furthermore, you see yourself as a generous person, and a truly generous person is quick to notice and respond to people and projects deserving of support.

The moral here, of course, is that much of what we do, try to do, decline to do, or (sometimes) consider abhorrent to even contemplate doing, as well as how we evaluate actual or potential experiences, is based on our perception of our own attributes, i.e., our conception of what we are, or should be, like.

Two basic distinctions. First, there is a distinction between the behaving person and the entity that the behaving person identifies as her or his self. Second, there is a distinction between the entity that the person identifies as her/his self and her/his conception of what that self is like with respect to its specific attributes.

The first distinction establishes my view of the "non-agency" versus "agency" of the self. The self is not an active agent. It is, rather, a concept in the literal sense, i.e., an object of knowledge on the part of the behaving person. Thus, the self has no energy or impetus of its own. The energy and impetus come from the behaving person as a whole. The behaving person does, however, develop a conception of her/himself as an identifiable entity. Because the entity identified as self provides the individual with a constant reference point for her/his experience and behavior, (s)he acquires a concern for its well-being and worth. Therefore, having such a conception has important motivational implications. Moreover, once fully developed, this self is unitary and unchanging.

The second distinction builds on the first and constitutes my way of harmonizing the differing views on whether the self is unitary or multiple. In addition to developing a conception of her or his self as an identifiable entity, the individual also comes to attribute to that entity a variety of specific characteristics. Taken together, these self-attributed characteristics (self-attributes) comprise the person's conception of the overall nature of the entity (s)he identifies as self, and thus makes up what we broadly label her/his "identity." Because the relevance and appropriateness of many of these self-attributes vary with varying situations, the individual expresses most of them selectively. Moreover, self-attributes are subject to development and change. It is in this sense that the "self" is multiple and unstable rather than unitary and unchanging.

The Entity Identified as Self

My proposals concerning the entity identified as self add very little to familiar thinking about self-awareness and its development. Moreover, whereas these proposals are foundational to my analysis of self-attributes and self-referent motivation, they constitute the aspect of self psychology that is a half-step removed from personal relationships per se. Please bear with me.

The normally developing human being eventually arrives at an awareness of her or his own existence as a separate, identifiable entity. This awareness is not something that generally occupies the focus of one's attention. Rather, it has a non-reflective, taken for granted quality. Each of us knows that (s)he exists as such an identifiable entity. We conduct our lives on the assumption that this is the case. We can, and sometimes do, think explicitly about it, but normally do not spend much time concentrating on it.

There is nothing about a simple awareness of one's own existence that would necessarily give coherence and continuity to her/his experiences. But this awareness is not really simple. It has several aspects which mature at different paces, and appear full blown at different points in the individual's growth. I am not enough of a child psychologist to even guess at when all the aspects of this awareness may be fully developed, but I suspect it is fairly early. Allport (1961) estimates that they are present in rudimentary form by the end of the third year, but do not stablize until the sixth year. Once they have all appeared, however, they add up to the entity that the individual identifies as her/his self.

Let us briefly scan some of the things that appear to occur almost universally during development and maturation that eventually add up to this entity. To begin with, the person is born with a body that is, in fact, bounded by a skin and therefore separate from everything else, including other people's bodies. That body is the locus of all the person's sensory experiences. A sense of separateness --or what Allport (1961) called the "sense of bodily self"-- probably starts developing because sensations that come from within the body (such as hunger pangs), or as a result of the body stimulating itself (as when a child sucks its thumb or plays with its own fingers), begin to be recognized as different from sensations stimulated by objects apart from the body.

Not only is the person's body physically distinct, it is continuously present. (S)He never goes anywhere without it. Other bodies come and go, and appearance of the environment changes as the child moves around --or is moved around-- in it. But her or his own body is always there, always providing the locus for sensory and motor experiences. This sort of constancy makes it virtually certain that a normally developing person will arrive at a sense of her or his continuity of existence, equivalent to what Allport (1961) labelled a "sense of continuing identity."

A growing sense of separateness is helped along when the child's movements start encountering resistance. As the child matures sufficiently to control her or his own movements, (s)he discovers that (s)he has more control over those movements than over the movements of objects and other persons. Moreover, (s)he learns that there is a difference between activity and passivity, i.e., between having things happen and making things happen. There is a difference, for example, between reaching out and grasping a colorful toy and having the toy placed in one's hand. This provides the basis in experience for the development of a sense of initiative or causal power. This constitutes part of what Allport (1961) called --confusingly, I believe-- a "sense of self esteem."

When the developing child starts using those increasingly controllable movements in transactions with the environment, (s)he does so as a whole. For example, the act of reaching out

and grasping that previously mentioned colorful toy, no matter how clumsily executed, involves a complex pattern of bodily movements coordinated with various sensations, primarily those of vision and touch --all localized as a single experience. This raw material for a sense of unity is helped along by socializing agents who give the child a name and otherwise treat her/him as singular and complete.

Thus, well before adolescence, the individual has a fully developed conception of her/himself as an identifiable entity. That is, (s)he is implicitly --and sometimes explicitly-- aware that: 1) (s)he is physically distinct from objects and other persons, 2) her/his existence is a continuous chain of behavior and experience of which (s)he and only (s)he is always a part, 3) (s)he behaves and experiences as a unit, and 5) within limits, (s)he can exercise initiative and make things happen that would not happen if (s)he were to remain passive. Once formed, this entity becomes a constant reference point --the only constant reference point-- for the individual's experience and behavior, meaning only that the person's experience are not disembodied or disconnected. They are localized somewhere, and that "somewhere" is centered in the entity identified as self.

Having a conception of one's self in the foregoing sense has important motivational implications. Personality psychologists often base much of their thinking on the common and, I believe, reasonable assumption that people normally maintain a concern for their well-being and worth. According to several theorists of the (so-called) neo-analytic persuasion, such a concern exists in a primitve form before the individual develops even a rudimentary sense of self. Sullivan (1953), for example, proposed that the infant's experiences of satisfaction versus those of tension and anxiety give rise to separate "good me" and "bad me" personifications. When the personifications begin to "fuse" (i.e. become unified and integrated) into a self system, the integration is effected in a way that wards off or minimizes anxiety. Thus, the self system develops as a mechanism for monitoring and filtering the individual's experiences so that the "good me" --the non-anxiety provoking me-- and its derivatives maintain ascendance. Theorists of a more phenomenological bent imply that the individual's concern for her/his well-being arises in conjunction with the development of her/his self concept. Rogers (1959), for example, postulated a universal need for positive self regard that inevitably develops out of each individual's more basic need for positive regard as experienced in her/his early relationships with others.

It is but a small step from such observations to the conclusion that individuals evaluate their behavior and experiences in terms of good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, pleasurable and painful, approved and disapproved, embarrassing and enhancing, etc. These evaluations, like the experiences themselves, are localized by the person in the entity identified as self. Note the common reference point in the following expressions: "I like that." "That hurts [me]!" "Look [at me], Ma, no hands!" "I'm so ashamed of myself," "That's too risky [for me to try]." "I'm a good girl." "Guys, it doesn't get any better than this [for me]." "That feels good [to me]." "If I dood it, I'll get a spankin' " (with apologies to comedian Red Skelton). Thus, the individual's concern for the well-being and worth of the entity identified as self constitutes the basic motive linking that self to the individual's behavior, and to the development of self-attributes and several more specific self-referent motives.

Identifying the tendency to maintain the well being and worth of the self as a key motive provides, among other things, a means of addressing the issue of the pervasiveness of self-reference in human behavior. Is the individual's conception of her/his self implicated in everything (s)he does or experiences? Can we understand anything about a person without considering that person's awareness --implicit or otherwise-- of her/his self? Some scholars define the self in a way that makes it, if not nearly ubiquitous, at least highly central (Benesch & Page, 1989; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Webster & Kobieszek, 1974). Indeed, my own approach may seem to imply such ubiquity. However, from my perspective, the significance of self-reference in any given context is a matter of degree. Strictly speaking, because the entity identified as self is a constant reference point, everything the individual does or experiences is self-referent. Practically speaking, however, some things are significantly self-referent and others are not. A given aspect of experience or behavior may be so inconsequential or transitory that its implications for the self as an entity are negligible. In general, then, experience or behavior is significantly self-referent, and is evaluated by the behaving person as good, bad or indifferent, to the degree that it is related to the well-being and worth of the entity identified as self.

Self-attributes and their Development

What is a self-attribute? A self-attribute is any characteristic or status that the individual recognizes, either explicitly or implicitly, as a valid descriptor of the entity (s)he identifies as her/his self. I recognize it as valid, for example, that I am a husband, a father, a grandfather, a professor, hearing impaired, physically healthy, a bit obsessive and nit-picking, honest, generous, a "pick-up" hockey player (an unbelievably bad hockey player, but a hockey player nonetheless), a social psychologist, a fair-to-good cook (depending upon the dish), that I wear a size-nine shoe, and have brown eyes. Never mind for the moment that some of these self-attributes make a great deal of difference to me whereas others border on the irrelevant. We shall deal with that issue later. For now, let us elaborate upon some delimiters that I believe convert the definition of a self-attribute, for all its seemingly unweildy inclusiveness, into a manageable and useful concept.

First, the individual must recognize the characteristic or status as a valid descriptor of her/his self. Thus, a self-attribute is distinguishable from the standard structures or dimensions that theorists often use to identify individual differences among persons, e.g., personality traits, personal dispositions, attitudes, or dominant values. An individual may, indeed, "measure out" as possessing certain traits, dispositions, attitudes, or values. Such measures may even render that individual's behavior understandable, coherent, and sometimes predictable to outside observers. They do not count as self-attributes, however, unless the individual recognizes them as valid descriptors. One may, by any number of criteria --including the unanimous judgment of other people-- be a genuinely conscientious person. (S)He could even be aware that other people see her/him as conscientious. But (s)he may nonetheless be convinced by her/his own self-observation that conscientiousness is not a significant aspect of what the entity (s)he identifies as self is like. By the same token, under some circumstances, a person may possess a self-attribute that is not supported by external criteria, including the opinions of other people. In such cases, confronting evidence that one does not, in fact, have that attribute can come as quite a shock, especially if the attribute in question is significantly self-referent (see below).

Second, the individual's recognition of a given self-attribute may be either explicit or implicit. People are generally aware of many of their self-attributes, and able to verbalize them clearly. On the other hand, self-attributes usually operate indirectly and implicitly. They are most often observed in day to day actions and reactions, such as preferred activities, goals, self-assessments, and responses to --or rejections of-- opportunities. In most cases, however, when a person is confronted directly with the question of whether (s)he does or does not possess a particular attribute, (s)he is usually able to answer with a reasonable degree of certainty. A person with a self-attribute of generosity, for example, may not (in fact, probably would not) spend a great deal of time telling her/himself or others that (s)he was, indeed, a generous person. Rather (s)he would behave generously when an appropriate occasion arose, sometimes seek out situations calling for generosity, feel "not-quite-right" about having passed up an opportunity to behave generously, feel especially "right" after having behaved generously, etc. However, in circumstances fostering self-observation or self-reflection, (s)he would probabably be able to identify generosity as one of her/his self-attributes. We will return to this point in our discussion of how people develop, change, and become aware of self-attributes.

Third, although virtually anything that a person recognizes as a consistently valid descriptor of her/himself is (or can become) a self-attribute, not all self-attributes are significantly self-referent. To apply a principle suggested earlier concerning the ubiquity of the self, a given self-attribute will be significantly self-referent to the degree that it has implications for the well-being and worth of the entity identified as self. In other words, some self-attributes, although "true," may be so inconsequential that they may be totally discounted. To cite a trivial (to me) example, one of my self-attributes is baldness. It is true that I am bald. I would not mind having a full head of hair, but I do not mind being bald. I do not wear a toupee, nor have I bought special hair-restoring lotions or considered a hair transplant. There are other men, however, who have their own good reasons for regarding baldness significantly (and negatively) self-referent in that it affects, to some degree, their assessment of their overall well-being and worth.

Several considerations concerning the identification, internal organization, and selective expression of self-attributes remain to be discussed. This discussion can best be deferred until after the following analysis of how self-attributes develop and change.

The development of self-attributes. My analysis of the development of self-attributes consists largely of a focussing and ordering of processes that are present or implied in at least five well-established theoretical approaches. Two simple and straightforward approaches are classical reinforcement in the Skinnerian tradition (Lundin, 1974), and what I initially (Wright, 1977) labelled "direct socialization" or "direct exhortation." The latter is identical to what Bandura (1986) identifies as "verbal persuasion" (see below). More detailed and complex analyses are available in Bandura's (1986; 1989) modeling/social learning approach, and symbolic interactionism (Charron, 1989; Hewitt, 1984; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Mead, 1924). Bem's (1972) self-perception theory, another simple and straightforward appoach, is not concerned directly with the development of self-attributes, but suggests a process whereby individuals come to identify their self-attributes with sharpness and clarity.

Lundin (1974), like other behavioral analysts, views any persistence and consistency in responding in terms reinforcement contingencies. What we call personal dispositions, attitudes, and self-perceived traits are merely descriptive terms for a range of responses that bear a global similarity to one another, i.e., that are broadly classifiable as, for example, "honest" or "polite" behaviors. When such responses are reinforced consistently in only one setting or in the presence of a particular person or persons, the processes of stimulus discrimination and response differentation render them cue-dependent. However, they may be frequently reinforced by a variety of persons or in a variety of settings, or both. If so, the class of responses will acquire a degree of generality that gives them the appearance of an "underlying disposition." For our purposes, the message is that people acquire the self-attributes they are reinforced for expressing in overt behavior.

Identifying "direct exhortation" or "verbal persuasion" as a source of self-attributes is tantamount to proposing that people develop the characteristics that important socializing agents tell them, in one way or another, that they should have. Individuals are often urged by those close to them to "be" a particular kind of person, e.g., more confident, more assertive, less demanding, more tactful, more conscientious, more easy going. However, direct exhoration is often not very direct, and it does not appear to be exhortation. People are frequently pointed toward the attributes significant others want them to develop by the opportunities those significant others make clearly available to them. It is usually not difficult to identify a parent, for example, who wants a child to grow up to be musical or athletic or skilled with tools or "brainy." One need only take note of the possibilities the parent presents, including the kinds of gifts and toys (s)he chooses for the child. When exhoration takes this indirect form, it shades into some aspects of symbolic interactionism (see below).

The modeling approach, as applied to the development of self-attributes, assumes that the observing subject attends to and "encodes" (retains cognitively) behaviors of a model that express or imply an underlying characteristic such as altruism, honesty, or patience. Assuming further that the observer is capable of performing the observed behaviors, (s)he may or may not actually do so, depending upon whether (s)he has reason anticipate some form of reinforcement. The observer may note, for example, that the model enjoyed a rewarding or gratifying outcome or (s)he may, in fact, be promised some benefit for emulating the behavior. Powerful, attractive, successful or otherwise important persons are especially effective as models, probably because they are more likely to attract and sustain the necessary attention.

Modeling has been applied to the acquisition of a number of self-referent characteristics, including gender identity (see Bandura, 1986). It comes as a bit of surprise, then, that Bandura himself relegates modeling to a relatively minor place as one of four processes in the development of the self-attribute to which he devotes by far the greatest share of his attention, i.e., self-efficacy. For Bandura, the development and maintenance of a high level of self-efficacy is accomplished through "enactive attainment" (successful task accomplishment), vicarious experience (including modeling), verbal persuasion, and (lack of) emotional arousal. Although Bandura does not make a clear conceptual distinction among these processes, please note that two of them (vicarious experience and verbal persuasion) refer to instigating conditions whereas the other two (enactive attainment and emotional arousal) refer to feedback conditions or self-observation.

Symbolic interactionism provides a richly nuanced analysis of the development of many aspects of the self. Of particular concern for our purposes is that aspect of self known as one's "identity" (see, e.g. Charron, 1989, Chapter 6; Hewitt, 1984, Chapter 4). This is the aspect of the self that the person recognizes as what (s)he is "really like" or, as Burke (1980, p. 18) put it, "the meanings a person attributes to the self." One's identity, like other aspects of the self, is clearly a social product. It develops largely out of the responses one's actions elicit from significant others or, more precisely, the symbolic meaning of her/his own acts as they are reflected back in others' responses. The person literally comes to define her/himself in the way (s)he is treated by others. The power of this influence on one's identity is epitomized in Cooley's (1902) expression "looking glass self" and Sullivan's term (1953) term "reflected appraisals." Although symbolic interactionism in no sense overlooks the importance of instigating conditions in self development, the emphasis in identity formation is clearly upon feedback processes.

We may deal with Bem's (1972) self-perception theory rather simply because it is, in fact, a simple theory. Bem proposes that we become aware of our own motives and characteristics in much the same manner that we become aware of those of other people, i.e., by observing how we behave under varying circumstances and drawing conclusions about what that behavior must mean concerning our own attributes. Its simplicity notwithstanding, the theory has some interesting and important implications. It has been applied, for example, to the understanding of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation (Lepper, 1981). Individuals who persist in a particular kind of activity in the absence of any obvious external incentive are likely to attribute their behavior to personal interest and motivation. If, however, some external incentive is introduced, they are likey to attribute their behavior to the appeal of the incentive and often curtail their behavior if the incentive is withdrawn. For our purpose, self-perception theory reduces to the proposition that we become aware of our self-attributes by reflecting on our own behavior in various circumstances and drawing conclusions about the implications of that behavior for the kinds of persons we are. In effect, we come to define ourselves in terms of what we consistently observe ourselves doing.

Taken as a whole, these theoretical positions suggest four basic steps or processes in the development of specific self-attributes. These are instigating or cueing conditions, behavior (enactment), reinforcement, and feedback (including self-observation). I will first briefly cover the "ideal" (i.e., simple and positive) case. Then I will deal with some of the complexities of the process.

Direct exhortation, modeling, and any number of socially defined situations provide cueing conditions indicating to the individual what (s)he could be like, should be like, would benefit from being like, or might find enjoyable or gratifyng to be like. If the cueing conditions are sufficiently compelling, the individual will generally attempt to behave in a manner consistent with the cued attribute. Such behavior may be reinforced, non-reinforced, or punished. If the behavior is reinforced, it is likely to be repeated and, eventually, to become habitual or characteristic. Through the feedback provided by the reponses of others and by the individual's own self-observation, (s)he becomes aware of her/his own characteristic behavior, i.e., what (s)he is like in actuality, and hence identifies a positive self-attribute.

This simple model is complicated first by the fact that self-attributes often develop around characteristics that the individual cannot control or alter behaviorally. One cannot, for example, be cued to develop blue eyes, a certain height, (usually) a trim figure, or full physical capability where a serious disability exists. The answer to this complication is, of course, that a person may be cued to behave with respect to such characteristics in a way that determines their personal meanings and the degree to which they are significantly self-referent.

A more telling complication arises from the fact that an individual's attempts to behave in a manner consistent with a cued attribute may not be reinforced and may, in fact, be punished. Thus, contrary to the "nice" case cited above, a person may acquire self-attributes that are negative rather than positive. A person may be cued, for example, to be a top student in all subjects, an outstanding athlete in several sports, or bold and courageous in the face of adversity. In attempting to live out the cued attribute, the person may, in her/his own or others' estimation, fall well short of successful enactment. This shortfall may amount to mere non-reinforcement, in which case the individual might conclude that (s)he is not, in fact, a top student, a skilled athlete, or a particularly courageous person and let it go at that. One the other hand, the shortfall may be punished by the individual her/himself (see Bandura, 1986) or by important others. In this case, the person may be on her/his way to developing a negative self-attribute. This is especially true if the cueing conditions persist (as they often do), leading the person to continue trying to enact the cued attribute. Assuming that the attempted enactment is repeatedly unsuccessful, as it sometimes is, the individual is likely to develop a full-blown self-attribute of scholarly mediocrity, athletic incompetence, or cowardice and timidity.

An equally telling complication arises from the fact that reinforcement comes from different sources that may, and often do, conflict with one another. Broadly speaking, reinforcement may be either intrinsic or extrinsic. An individual may, for example, feel good or satisfied or "fulfilled" after having returned a substantial (and undetected) amount of favorably incorrect change to a grocery clerk, or completing a refinishing job on a piece of old furniture, or successfully solving a difficult crossword puzzle, or besting a clever adversary in an argument, or performing well in a foot race --all apart from any reaction from other people. Or an individual may feel good or satisfied or fulfilled for those same accomplishments only after being recognized, praised, or materially reimbursed by some other important person or persons. For the most part, intrinsic and extrinsic reinforcement are either compatible or unrelated to each other. In some cases, however, they conflict. An individual who finds satisfaction in returning incorrect change may find that important others regard such excessive honesty as unnecessary, naive, and a trifle stupid. Or a person who regards keeping such incorrect change as justified, shrewd, and her/his "due" may find that important others consider it dishonest and unwarranted.

A conflict between intrinsic and extrinsic sources of reinforcement in either the development or the expression of self-attributes is akin to the situation Rogers (1959) described globally as "conditional positive regard." In such a situation, the individual is faced with the choice of feeling alienated from self or alienated from others, or possibly a perpetual vacillation between the two. Examples of such situations abound. Suppose, for one, that a woman with an almost grown set of children returns to school and finds personal fulfillment and satisfaction in the self-attribute "student" and the numerous sub-attributes that that broad self-attribute implies. Suppose, at the same time, that her genuinely loved and loving husband, as well as her children,

her parents and her siblings, feel she should abandon her "hobby" and concentrate on continuing to be an exemplary wife, mother, and household manager. Along with the difficulty of either deciding between or attempting to reconcile self- and other-alientation, the woman may need a great deal of help in maintaining her self-attribute of "serious student." Little wonder that Self-Affirmation Value, as we shall note in a later chapter, is such an important reward in personal relationships.

As the foregoing analysis clearly implies, acquiring and changing self-attributes is a continuous, life-long process. During childhood, the changes are often rapid and sweeping but they gradually become less so until eventually one's more significantly self-referent attributes become relatively permanent and stable. It is at this point that some theorists (e.g., Erikson, 19xx) would say that the individual is on the way to forming an identity. From the present perspective, having an identity involves, first, being reasonably confident about what attributes are, in fact, valid descriptors of the entity identified as self and, second, being aware of degree to which those various attributes have significant implications for one's overall worth and well-being. Even so, changes continue to take place, albeit normally in a gradual and orderly fashion. Any notable life transition generally carries with it the opportunity to acquire different self-attributes or alter existing ones. A hard-headed, chronically assertive business executive with little inclination toward nurturance, for example, may become a parent and, within that context, acquire a valued self-attribute of nurturance. Or an individual who is and never has been particularly studious may, for whatever reason, return to school and eventually come to see her/himself as a serious, dedicated student. In fact, theorists with either a symbolic interactionist or dialectic bent propose that the process of forming and maintaining personal relationships involves, to some degree, the emergence of distinctive selves.

The Identification and Organization of Self-attributes.

The identification of self-attributes. By the definition I proposed, the different kinds and levels of characteristics and statuses a given individual may recognize as self-attributes could add up to a list that is virtually limitless. What, then, is the most adequate approach to identifying those that are most signficantly self-referent for a given individual. From one standpoint, this could be a rather simple matter. One could start with a list of generally valued characteristics --e.g., intelligence, honesty, attractiveness, generalized competence-- and get an estimate of which of those characteristics the individual regarded as a valid descriptor of her/himself, and the degree to which having or not having each charactersitic was related to her/his overall worth and well-being. From another standpoint, however, self-attributes develop so idiosyncratically that any effort to apply a universally applicable list is very likely to overlook those that are most central and highly valued by any given individual. Therefore, the more difficult idiographic (individual case) approach (Allport, 1968) is to be preferred as a research and assessment tactic. Among other advantages, the idiographic approach brings us closer to the way in which self-attributes are relevant to personal relationships. Indeed, as we shall eventually see, an important aspect of sensitivity in a relationship is reflecting back to one's partner a recognition and affirmation of her/his unique pattern of valued self-attributes.

The organization and "integration" of self-attributes. A point of contention among self scholars is the degree to which different aspects of the self are integrated and systematically

interdependent. Some theorists propose that each characteristic of the self is related to every other aspect. Historically speaking, perhaps the strongest among several advocates of this point of view was Lecky (1945). On the other hand, numerous scholars have proposed that a high levels of integration are more illusory than real. In 1968, for example, Wylie concluded that such integration had been neither adequately conceptualized nor empirically demonstrated and, by 1979, had found no reason to change her judgment. Hattie's (1992) recent conclusion concurs with that of Wylie. A less direct challenge to the overall integration of the self comes from scholars who emphasize the situational rather than the intrapersonal locus of self-attributes. Some time ago, for example, Coutu (1948) proposed that expressions of self characteristics represented "tinsits," i.e., "tendencies in situations." This is similar to Alexander's more recent analysis of "situated identities" (see, e.g. Alexander & Lauderdale, 1977). At the microscopic level, Lundin (1974) regarded self characteristics (like other traits) as generalized but nonetheless cue-dependent responses. Indeed, my own discussion of the acquisition of self-attributes may seem to imply, not quite accurately, that they develop discretely and operate independently of one another.

My middle-of-the-road position on this issue starts with the observation that most people most of the time behave in ways that imply unidirectionality, coherence, and an appreciable (although by no means perfect) level of consistency across situations. The question, then, is how much unity and systematic integration we need to assume to account for the observed level of unidirectionality and cross-situational consistency. First, in agreement with those who emphasize situational influences, self-attributes are expressed selectively, depending upon their appropriateness and relevance in varying circumstances. Beyond this obvious point, I believe the observed degree of unidirectionality and integration can be accounted for by four interrelated factors.

First, the self as an identifiable entity includes a sense of unity and continuity. When the person behaves or experiences, it is the self as a whole, not some isolated aspect of the self, that is involved. Moreover, when the person does different things at different times, the experience is one of a given self doing different things at different times, not of different selves doing different things.

Second, I have already noted that self-attributes vary in their significance depending upon the degree to which they implications for the worth and well-being of the self as an entity. Thus, in spite of occasional --and sometimes severe-- conflicts concerning which self-attributes to express or enact, most individuals most of the time are able to prioritize their self-referent behaviors and experiences.

Third, whereas some self-attributes are narrowly circumscribed (e.g., a good singer, terrified of speaking in front of formal groups), some are quite global in that they refer to a broad spectrum of behavioral or experiential dimensions. Bandura's (1986) concept of generalized self-efficacy is such an attribute. The individual regards her/himself as efficacious in not only one or a limited number of contexts, but in a wide range of contexts, i.e., as a generally efficacious person. There are numerous other attributes with the potential for being or becoming globally self-referent, including, for example, energetic, even-tempered, lazy, patient, nervous, incompetent, honest, persistent, courageous, sociable, timid.

Fourth, as the lingering appeal of balance and cognitive consistency theories attests (see, e.g. Hummert, Crockett, & Kemper, 1990; Thibodeau & Aronson, 1992), people are normally motivated to avoid intrapersonal and interpersonal inconsistency. This does not necessarily mean, however, that they seek and maintain a high level of intrapersonal consistency. In terms of my own perspective, it appears that people do tend to avoid obvious inconsistencies and contradictions among their self-attributes, but there is no reason to suppose that they maintain a high level of systematic interdependence among them. A colleague of mine, for example, has a number of valued self-attributes associated with his professorial status. He also has a number of valued self-attributes associated with his participation in amatuer ballet. It would put quite a strain on any consistency theory to demonstrate that these different sets of self-attributes were systematically interdependent. But neither are they contradictory or inconsistent with one another. Such lack of inconsistency, I believe, in combination with the other three points previously covered, is enough to account for the observed degree of unidirectionality and lack of conflict in self-referent behavior and experience.

Self-referent Motivation: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Concerning basic self-referent motivation, my original --and persistent-- contention was that the "individual develops a tendency to assess the well-being and evaluate the worth of the entity identified as self, especially when that well-being seems to be in jeopardy or that self-worth seems to be in question" (Wright, 1977, p. 427-428). More recently, Steele (1988) has built his "psychology of self-affirmation" on a similar proposition, providing supportive evidence for the existence of strong motivation to maintain "global self-integrity" (p. 289). In addition, I proposed that this key motive is expressed as four more specific behvioral tendencies that function as self-referent motives linking the individual's conception of her/his self and its attributes to her/his interactions with the environment and with other people. Eventually , research and theorizing dictated that I add a fifth (Wright, 1985). These five behavioral tendencies appeared to be at least moderately well supported by research and clinical observations. I am delighted to say that several highly creative (in my opinion) scholars and researchers concerned with psychology of self have since provided further support for the soundness and utility of the proposed motives.

First, people tend to behave in ways that maintain and, when necessary, reaffirm a sense of uniqueness or individuality. Early experimental work by Fromkin (1970; 1972) demonstrated that people do, indeed, tend to assert, and sometimes dramatically reaffirm, their distinctiveness, particularly when their distinctiveness is threatened or seriously questioned. Later work indicated that, although being too different from other people is not always desireable, being different enough to be unique is (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Recent studies on the process of individuation (Maslach, Santee, & Wade, 1987) confirm this conclusion. My own preferred explanation for why a sense of one's individuality is so important is based on social learning. Beginning early and continuing throughout life, a wide range of benefits and rewarding interactions that accrue to the individual are contingent upon identity rather than behavior. That is, they are forthcoming because of the particular individual (s)he is more so than for the specific things (s)he does. Moreover, people are generally rewarded for distinctive positive characteristics they have that set them apart from the ordinary, e.g., for being big for one's age, in

the top 10% of the class, or a gifted athlete or amateur vocalist. There are, in other words, a number of developmental and relational experiences that make one's individuality important in its own right or, to use standard learning terminology, a secondary reinforcer.

Second, people tend to behave in ways that assert and, when necessary, reaffirm their more highly valued self-attributes. The more important the self-attribute, the greater this tendency toward self-affirmation.[2] This proposition, variously stated, is a time-honored mainstay within both symbolic interactionism (e.g., Goffman, 1959) and the psychology interpersonal relations (e.g., Secord & Backman, 1965). The basic argument for this position is that the carefully managed expression of one's stable self-attributes permits reasonably orderly, continuous interaction with others as well as evoking suitably rewarding and/or predictable responses from them. The overall validity and utility of the proposition are well supported by Swann's impressive research program on self-verification processes (Swann & Read, 1981; Swann & Hill, 1982; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann, 1985). Taken as a whole, Swann's research indicates that subjects employ a variety of tactics, including selective social interaction, to strengthen or re-assert challenged self conceptions. Moreover, such self-verification is included as an integral part of Steele's emphasis on self-affirmation. Steele & Liu (1981), for example, proposed (and found) that counter-attitudinal behavior would not result in the usual cognitive dissonance effects if subjects were subsequently given an opportunity to verify their true self-referent attitudes. Researchers concerned with this facet of the psychology of self generally propose that self-verification processes are stimulated most strongly when an established aspect of one's self is seriously challenged. I would like to suggest further that the tendency toward self-affirmation surfaces equally strongly, if not more so, at transition points in one's life that entail acquiring and "trying on" (so to speak) new and previously unfamiliar self-attributes.

Third, in situations either encouraging or compelling self-evaluation, people tend to behave in ways that promote positive or self-enhancing assessments. This proposition, too, has a long-standing history in the fields of personality, self psychology, and social psychology. Currently, it finds strong expression as the cornerstone of Tesser's (1988) work on self-evaluation maintenance process (SEMs). A series of studies by Tesser & Cornell (1991) provides convincing evidence that individuals do, indeed, act to maintain and, if necessary, restore acceptably favorable levels of self-evaluation. These findings confirmed the authors' contention that people act only to maintain rather than to maximize self-evaluations. This differs from thinking of an earlier time when it was generally proposed that people are motivated to increase or maximize positive self-evaluations (see, e.g., Aronson & Linder, 1965; Sherwood, 1970). In either case, a tendency toward positive self-evaluation is reasonably well-established, and it does not take a great deal of insight and imagination to envision differing situations in which either maintenance or enhancement processes would predominate.

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[2]My conception of self-affirmation differs in significant ways from that of Steele (1988) in that I restrict it to the individual's tendency to express and verify the validity of specific self-attributes. Steele's use of the term, although including such specificity, refers more broadly to a tendency to maintain and reaffirm the integrity of the self as a whole.

Fourth, people tend to behave in ways that avoid or neutralize situations or events that threaten the well-being or worth of the self and its attributes. This, of course, is the other side of the coin concerning the tendency toward positive self-evaluations. In fact, both Tesser (1988) and Steele (1988) include (and find support for) such threat neutralization or avoidance as part of their respective theories of self-evaluation maintenance and self-affirmation processes (see, e.g., Josephs, Larrick, Steele, & Nisbett, 1992).

Fifth, people tend to behave in ways that change their self-attributes in the direction of growth and positive elaboration. A tendency toward positive self-growth is a major tenet of humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (1959) and Maslow (1968), who attribute such growth to the unfolding of the individual's innate creative potential. Rogers (1966), for example, proposed that all behavior, including self-growth, is guided by the actualizing tendency, i.e., "the inherent tendency of the organism to develop all its capacities in ways which serve to maintain or enhance the person" (p. 169). Sherwood (1970) suggested an alternative view. While agreeing that individuals do show personal growth and self-enhancement, he proposed that such self-actualization is not basic or innate but is, instead, the inevitable by-product of a learned propensity to increase self-esteem through periodic elevations of one's levels of aspiration. On the contemporary scene, a tendency toward self-growth is writ large in the work of Markus and her associates (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989) on "possible selves." According to these authors, much of the individual's current behavior and self-assessment center on realistic and foreseeable, although possibly distant, goals and aspirations. These goals and aspirations take on the personalized form of possible selves, i.e., the positive selves the individual hopes and plans to become as well as (in some cases) the negative selves (s)he hopes to avoid becoming. My own present inclination, in partial agreement with Sherwood (1970), is to regard the tendency toward self-growth as the outcome of learning and socialization. As the individual develops and matures, (s)he becomes more adept at doing familiar things as well as capable of doing increasingly difficult and complicated things. This opportunity for self-observed personal growth is strongly augmented by socializing agents who expect the individual to become increasingly mature and sophisticated, and communicate this expectancy in a variety of ways. In a very real sense, the well-being and worth of the self as a whole becomes contingent upon some degree of continued growth and development. Thus, the phenomenon described as self-actualization is not an innate motivational process, but falls in the category of variables that Rogers (1959) himself identified as "conditions of worth."

Summing it All Up

By drawing on the rich conceptual yield from the work of both historic and contemporary self theorists, I have been able fashion to my own satisfaction a conception of the person who gets involved in personal relationships. This person is an active, holistically functioning individual who has a conception of her/himself as an entity which (s)he identifies as "self." (S)He knows, but generally takes for granted, that 1) (s)he is distinct from all other things, including other persons, 2) (s)he functions as a unit, 3) her/his existence as an identifiable entity is continuous over time and across situations, and 4) (s)he can exercize a certain degree of initiative or causal power, i.e., (s)he knows that there are great number of things in her/his life that will happen (or be avoided) if (s)he take action that will not happen, or will happen differently, if (s)he does not. Because (s)he is concerned for the well-being and worth of the

entity (s)he identifies as self, (s)he is responsive to rewarding circumstances or "reinforcement contingencies" but, because (s)he is aware of her/his causal power, (s)he is not enslaved by them.

The person attributes to her/his self a virtually limitless variety of characteristics (self-attributes) that collectively constitute her/his conception of what that self is like. These self-attributes vary in globality-specificity (i.e., the ranges of behavior and experience for which they are relevant), and in the degree to which they are related to the well-being and worth of the self as a whole. They are expressed or enacted selectively, they influence the kinds of situations and other individuals the person will become involved with, and they influence the ways in which (s)he will act and react in those situations and with those persons. Some of the person's self-attributes change over time, usually in a gradual and orderly fashion. That is, through ongoing experience and behavior (including social interaction), existing self-attributes are often modified or eliminated, and new ones acquired.

In living out her/his concern for the well-being and worth of the entity (s)he identifies as self, the person will behave in ways that 1) affirm her/his sense of individuality, 2) affirm the validity of her/his more important and highly valued self-attributes, 3) promote positive or enhancing self-evaluations, 4) avoid or neutralize threats to the well-being and worth of the self and its attributes, and 5) promote changes in self-attributes in the direction of positive growth and elaboration.

With the foregoing set of propositions in place, we are ready to explore conceptually the person's involvement in personal relationships. Just what is the "essence" of a personal relationship? What is it, in other words, that makes a personal relationship personal rather than impersonal or "merely social?" Why are personal relationships such an important part of so many people's lives? Are personal relationships formed and maintained only because they provide rewards that cannot be obtained, or obtained as easily, from non-social sources? If so, is it accurate to say that all personal relationships are, at base, selfishly motivated? We will address these and related questions in Chapter 4, The Functional Anatomy of Personal Relationships.