CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Self and Relationships

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The chapters in this volume offer unique perspectives on the interplay between self and relationships. Those in Part I address how the self affects relationships, while those in Part II address how relationships affect the self. They lead the reader on a tour of the latest and most compelling evidence concerning the powerful associations between intrapersonal processes and interpersonal relationships.

The field has not arrived at consensual definitions of the terms "self" and "relationship," so we use these terms broadly in the current volume. *Self* phenomena are defined as those pertaining to the individual that are not dependent upon specific relational contexts. Examples include self-regulation, the self-concept, and stable individual differences in relational schemas. *Relationship* phenomena are defined as those pertaining to interpersonal dynamics that are more than the summation of the interactants' characteristics. Examples include social acceptance and rejection, interdependence, and being influenced by relationship partners' views and expectations regarding the self.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"Self" and "relationships" have become hot topics in social and personality psychology over the past several decades. Historically, researchers generally examined psychological processes either within the self or between two individuals. That is, they traditionally engaged in self research or in relationships research, with few scholars linking these two domains (exceptions include Baldwin & Holmes, 1987; Baumeister, 1982; Berkman & Syme, 1979; Bowlby, 1969/1982; Carver, 1975; Dion & Dion, 1973; Markus, Smith, & Moreland, 1985; Reis, Nezlek, & Wheeler, 1980; Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979; Tesser, 1988; and Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). In the past 15 years, the quantity and quality of research linking these research areas have swelled. Social and personality psychologists are developing exciting new ideas about how self processes influence relationship dynamics and vice versa, and consequently a new subfield of psychology has emerged. Scholars increasingly identify their research interests with phrases such as "self-in-relationships" and "relational self."

One illustration of the transition from viewing self and relationships as separate research areas to seeing their interrelations comes from authors' reactions to the research categories for articles in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (*JPSP*). *JPSP*, one of the most prestigious Journals in psychology, is divided into three sections: (1) attitudes and social cognition, (2) interpersonal relations and group processes, and (3) personality processes and individual differences. Historically, it seemed that articles fit neatly into one of these three sections. It seems now, however, that articles published in one section frequently could have been published in another. Much of this boundary blurring is emerging at the intersection of self and relationship processes, providing exciting opportunities for social and personality psychologists to produce a more balanced and complete approach to understanding both research domains.

Many psychological scientists are already pursuing research examining the interplay between self and relationships, but we believe that such research is still in the early stages of a steep upswing. The goals of the present volume are (1) to collect in one place discussions of prominent programs of research that examine the interplay between self and relationship processes, and (2) to identify a common *self and relationships* theme connecting these seemingly disparate programs. Moreover, it can serve as a reference guide for researchers interested in perusing research at the intersection of the self and relationships.

Toward these ends, the volume brings together chapters written by influential scholars on research at this intersection. Readers will come away with a new understanding of relevant theoretical perspectives and methodological

approaches. We hope to demonstrate to readers (behavioral scientists, students, and professors) the potential of this topic to lead the way in psychological advancements of the 21st century.

OVERVIEW OF THIS VOLUME

Part I (Chapters 2 though 10) examines how intrapersonal processes influence interpersonal relationships; Part II (Chapters 11 through 20) examines how interpersonal relationships influence intrapersonal processes. Each part is further divided into three sections. The Part I sections are "Self-Regulation," "Self-Concept," and "Interpersonal Schemas and Orientations," and the Part II sections are "Interdependence: Overarching Perspectives," "Specific Social Interaction Processes," and "Interpersonal Cognitive Processes."

Part I: Self → Relationships

Chapters 2 and 3 make up the Part I section entitled *Self-Regulation*. In Chapter 2, Rawn and Vohs emphasize the importance of effective self-regulation in promoting successful interpersonal functioning. They review research demonstrating, for example, that the experience of state-level depletion of self-regulatory resources causes people to (1) experience reduced motivation to behave in socially appealing ways, (2) behave narcissistically, (3) be either too intimate or too dismissive in their self-disclosures, and (4) attend closely to attractive alternatives to a current romantic partner. The authors also review compatible evidence demonstrating that poor inhibitory control at a dispositional level has similarly destructive relational consequences.

In Chapter 3, Fitzsimons argues that pursing particular self-regulatory goals (e.g., career goals, social goals, health goals) influences perceptions of and behavior toward close relationship partners who are linked strongly versus weakly to those goals. She asserts that the drive to accomplish a particular goal alters such perceptions and behaviors in a manner that facilitates goal attainment. Relationship partners who are seen by the individual as likely to facilitate goal attainment are evaluated more positively and are behaviorally approached, whereas those who are seen as likely to interfere with goal attainment are evaluated more negatively and are behaviorally avoided. Such evaluative and behavioral processes emerge only when the particular goal is active. Preliminary evidence suggests that these processes indeed facilitate goal achievement.

Chapters 4 through 6 make up the Part I section entitled *Self-Concept*. In Chapter 4, Campbell, Brunell, and Finkel conceptualize narcissism as a positive and inflated self-concept in agentic domains like intelligence, creativity,

and physical attractiveness—but not in communal domains like warmth, intimacy, and closeness. Individuals characterized by narcissistic self-conceptions adopt interpersonal strategies (e.g., dating "trophy partners," engaging in self-serving social comparisons) in which they use others to enhance their perception of themselves. In addition, narcissists frequently employ an impressive arsenal of interpersonal skills (e.g., confidence, charm, charisma) to acquire partners who enhance their narcissistic esteem.

In Chapter 5, Park, Crocker, and Vohs use a new theory based on an old idea first proposed by William James: that people base their self-esteem on performance in certain domains (e.g., academic achievement, moral virtue, physical appearance), with their overall feelings of self-worth heavily influenced by positive or negative feedback in those crucial domains. The authors review evidence that people who have self-validation goals—that is, who have a desire to prove that they possess the characteristics on which they base their self-esteem—focus excessively on themselves and consequently have less successful relationships with others. In a compelling synthesis, they incorporate into their *contingencies of self-worth model* research on rejection sensitivity, insecure attachment styles, and both unstable and low self-esteem.

In Chapter 6, Van Orden and Joiner review research demonstrating that having negative self-views (having low self-esteem or experiencing depression) predicts engaging in excessive reassurance seeking, a maladaptive interpersonal strategy that ultimately leads to social rejection. Although this reassurance-seeking behavior is a self-regulatory strategy oriented toward making individuals feel more secure, it frequently backfires, pushing away the very people they most want close to them.

Chapters 7 through 10 make up the Part I section entitled *Interpersonal Schemas and Orientations*. In Chapter 7, Feeney examines the interpersonal consequences of *attachment working models*, which are relationship schemas that enable individuals to plan their behavior and predict the behavior of others in response to relationship events. Feeney reviews a stimulating program of research demonstrating that attachment working models influence support-seeking and support-giving behaviors when at least one partner in a romantic relationship experiences distress. Additional evidence indicates that attachment working models can systematically bias perceptions of a partner's support-giving behaviors.

In Chapter 8, Knee and Canevello distinguish between two distinct implicit theories of relationships: destiny beliefs and growth beliefs. These theories refer to individuals' implicit assumptions about the stability of their perceptions of partner compatibility (destiny) and the nature and stability of problems in relationships (growth). Implicit theories of relationships influence how partners assign meaning to interpersonal events, and therefore how they respond behaviorally to such events.

In Chapter 9, Showers and Limke build on research examining the structure of self-knowledge by applying a similar analysis to the structure of partner knowledge. They investigate not only whether knowledge of the partner is positive or negative but also whether it is integrated (with positive and negative beliefs about the partner frequently appearing within the same categories of partner knowledge) or compartmentalized (with categories of partner knowledge tending to be purely positive or purely negative). The authors review research demonstrating that when the description of one's partner is generally positive, compartmentalization predicts greater liking and loving toward the partner, but when the description is generally negative, integration is associated with more positive feelings. Follow-up research reveals the intriguing findings that positive compartmentalized individuals have the highest rate of breakup and negative compartmentalized individuals experience especially stable relationships.

In Chapter 10, Van Lange argues that social scientists overestimate the power of self-interest as the dominant orientation with which individuals approach relationships. This overestimation has blinded researchers (including psychologists) from seeing the importance of other interpersonal orientations. Van Lange discusses the relevance of six conceptually distinct orientations (altruism, cooperation, egalitarianism, individualism, competition, and aggression) and suggests that recognizing their impact is essential to understanding topics such as helping, aggression, cooperation, negotiation, and close relationships.

Part II: Relationships → Self

Chapters 11 through 14 make up the Part II section entitled *Interdependence: Overarching Perspectives*. In Chapter 11, Leary observes that the implicit assumption in most self research is that the self is independent of the social world. He takes a different perspective, arguing that "viewing the self as a psychological process without considering its interpersonal functions and origins may lead to an impoverished perspective on self processes" (p. 232). He provides an evolutionary analysis of the origins of selfhood, beginning with the observation that our ancestors depended upon their social groups for survival and reproductive advantages. As a result, humans evolved the ability to monitor other people's thoughts and intentions vis-à-vis the self (e.g., Do they intend to cause me harm?). Although such monitoring was initially performed nonconsciously and automatically, it was eventually accompanied by self-awareness, which allowed individuals to think consciously about other people's reactions toward them. Through the research on "sociometer theory" reviewed in the chapter, Leary argues that the self-esteem system evolved to monitor others' reactions and to alert the individual to possible social exclusion.

In Chapter 12, Blackhart, Baumeister, and Twenge examine the powerful, adverse effects of social rejection on self-regulation. Experimental evidence reveals that people who have been rejected make poor decisions, engage in unhealthy behaviors, procrastinate, and are unable to delay gratification. In addition, they (1) display aggressive behavior toward others and (2) exhibit reluctance to donate money to an important cause, to volunteer for future studies, and to help after a mishap.

In Chapter 13, Lucas and Dyrenforth examine whether the *existence* of social relationships predicts subjective well-being. Given the overwhelming evidence that having relationships predicts outcomes such as superior physical health and that having high-quality relationships predicts subjective well-being, one might expect that the *existence* of relationships would also predict subjective well-being. Lucas and Dyrenforth's compelling review, however, reveals the surprising finding that the existence of relationships exhibits only weak associations with subjective well-being.

In Chapter 14, Agnew and Etcheverry argue that certain characteristics of social relationships influence self-concept structure. They emphasize the idea that two core features of dyadic interdependence—correspondence of outcomes (the degree to which the two partners have matching behavioral preferences in particular situations) and dependence on the relationship for positive outcomes—influence the degree to which one's self-concept is individuated from (vs. connected to) the partner. They review research demonstrating that relative to participants who experience low dependence on their relationship, those who experience high dependence exhibit greater spontaneous use of plural pronouns (e.g., "we," "us," "our," "ours"), one finding among many to demonstrate the important association of relationship dependence on self-structure.

Chapters 15 through 18 make up the Part II section entitled *Specific Social Interaction Processes*. In Chapter 15, Finkel, Campbell, and Brunell examine the effects of efficient versus inefficient social coordination on the interactants' subsequent self-regulatory success. Although coordination is sometimes efficient and effortless (*low maintenance*), at other times it is inefficient and effortful (*high maintenance*). Findings from a large series of studies reveal that high-maintenance interaction leads to self-regulatory failure, in terms of both diminished achievement motivation and impaired task performance. The chapter concludes by presenting a theoretical model integrating high-maintenance interaction, interpersonal conflict, and self-regulatory failure.

In Chapter 16, Kumashiro, Rusbult, Wolf, and Estrada incorporate concepts from the behavioral confirmation tradition, the self tradition, and the interdependence tradition to identify an interpersonal process they call the *Michelangelo phenomenon*. This phenomenon describes the means by which the self is "sculpted" by a close partner's behavior to approximate the self's

ideal. Kumashiro and colleagues review a program of research demonstrating strong associations between partner affirmation (the degree to which a partner's perceptions of and behavior toward the self are congruent with the self's ideal), movement over time toward the ideal self, and, ultimately, personal and couple well-being.

In Chapter 17, Strong and Aron build on *self-expansion theory* to argue that participating in novel and challenging activities with a romantic partner causes individuals to experience excited positive affect, which in turn causes them to experience their relationship as being of higher quality. They suggest that nonexciting positive affect (e.g., calmness, relief) or reduction in any type of negative affect cannot account for the association of shared participation in novel and challenging activities with enhanced relationship quality. The authors review a long and productive line of research examining how relational dynamics can fundamentally alter the composition of the self.

In Chapter 18, Koole, Kuhl, Jostmann, and Finkenauer examine social interaction processes in terms of two types of self-regulatory approaches called "action orientation" and "state orientation". People in an action-oriented frame of mind tend toward change and active self-regulation as they pursue their goals, whereas those in a state-oriented frame of mind tend to be resistant to change and do not engage in active self-regulation. Koole and colleagues argue that differences in action versus state orientation derive from (1) socialization processes that, for example, promote agency (for action-oriented individuals) or inhibit disengagement from undesirable states (for state-oriented individuals) and (2) situation-specific social triggers in which other people serve to bring out action- versus state-oriented coping.

Chapters 19 and 20 make up the Part II section entitled *Interpersonal Cognitive Processes*. In Chapter 19, Shah reviews evidence suggesting that the mental activation of relationship partners who are associated with certain goals influences goal strivings. Additional evidence suggests that these effects are moderated by factors such as number of goals associated with the significant other and the importance of the goal to the significant other. Taken together, evidence suggests that the mere cognitive accessibility of relationship partners can influence self-regulation.

In Chapter 20, Seeley and Gardner argue that social sensitivity and social accountability influence self-regulation. First, they present evidence that efforts aimed at establishing and maintaining harmonious social relationships serve to build self-regulatory capacity. Second, they suggest that the interpersonal accountability that emerges from disclosing goals (e.g., to quit smoking) to close others increases the likelihood of self-regulatory success by removing the burden of choice from the self-control process. Moreover, this effect remains strong over time, even when the discloser is not in the presence of others who know about the goal.

THROWING PERSPECTIVE INTO REVERSE

Although the chapters in Part I emphasize how intrapersonal processes influence interpersonal relationships and those in Part II emphasize how interpersonal relationships influence intrapersonal processes, all chapters also briefly examine the opposite causal pathway. The chapters in Part I also examine how relationship dynamics influence self-regulation, self-concept, or interpersonal schemas and orientations, and those in Part II also examine how intrapersonal processes influence general interdependence processes, specific social interaction processes, and interpersonal cognitive processes. The overarching conclusion is that there is a dynamic and bidirectional interplay between self and relationship processes. Empirical research on such dynamics, however, is sparse. Experimental and longitudinal investigations examining the temporal unfolding of self and relationship processes will provide particularly fertile ground for theory development.

BRIDGING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Major ideas linking self and relationships were dominant in the early years of psychological social science. Seminal ideas by scholars such as Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Erikson (1950), and Sullivan (1953) emphasized the importance of the interplay between processes that take place within persons and those that take place between them. Although such investigations had slowed for decades, they again find themselves at center stage in social and personality psychology. This volume brings together many of the most influential lines of research responsible for this featured location. We recognize that the accelerating pace of research in this domain means that not all of the emerging high-quality work has been captured herein; we eagerly await the wealth of knowledge on the interplay between self and relationships soon to be uncovered.

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