

PERSONALITY AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP PROCESSES

Few observers of relationship dynamics would dispute the claim of interdependence theorists that a defining feature of close relationships is the extent to which partners influence each other's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. However, partners do not behave simply in response to each other's behavior; both partners in a given relationship bring themselves – indeed, *their selves* – into the relationship as well. Not only are individuals' selves enormously complex and rich in content, but so too are the multitude of personality characteristics, including traits, values, attitudes, motives, and emotions, that contribute to selves' richness. Gaines provides a major integration of research on personality with research on relationship science and demonstrates how personality constructs can be readily incorporated into the two most influential theories of close relationships: attachment theory and interdependence theory. This study will be of value to scholars in the fields of close relationships, personality psychology, communication studies, and family studies.

Stanley O. Gaines, Jr. (PhD, University of Texas at Austin, 1991) is the author of *Culture, Ethnicity, and Personal Relationship Processes* (1997), and has written or co-written more than a hundred articles and book chapters, primarily in the fields of close relationships and ethnic studies. His specialty areas include cultural values and ethnic identity; interpersonal traits and attachment styles; and exchange and interdependence processes in close relationships. He has won numerous grants and fellowships from such diverse sources as the Ford Foundation, Fulbright Foundation, and American Psychological Foundation.

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To my son, Luther Stanley Gaines-White: You exist;
therefore, I am.

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Ironically, given the subject matter of the present book, I have described my conceptual and empirical journey as a solo effort. However, when I place the present book within the context of my academic career to date, I realize that many previously unmentioned scholars (at least within the present acknowledgments) helped prepare me for the journey. During my years as an undergraduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington, Harriett Amster's Psychology of Women course not only challenged my sensibilities regarding gender roles but also prompted me to change my major from biology (pre-dental) to psychology. Also, during my years as a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin, Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich not only were masters of the fields of personality psychology and social psychology (measuring such diverse constructs as gender-related traits, gender-role attitudes and compliance, achievement motives, and social self-esteem; e.g., Spence & Helmreich, 1978) but also socialized me professionally; William Swann and Daniel Gilbert showed me how elegant and precise social-psychological methodology can be; Donald Baumann helped me to see how valuable applied social psychology can be; John Loehlin taught me much of what I know about multivariate statistics; and Manuel Ramirez and John Warfield taught me that cultural psychology can be successfully integrated with personality psychology and social psychology. Finally, during my year as a predoctoral fellow at Macalester College, Jack Rossmann and Charles Torrey taught me how to be a reflective teacher. Without those formative influences, I can scarcely imagine myself writing a book that (hopefully) offers such a panoramic view of the literature on personality and close relationship processes.

Having completed the present book regarding the literature on personality and close relationship processes, I felt as if I had just completed a lengthy conceptual and empirical journey that led me to discover (1) which hypothesized personality-interdependence links were supported by the evidence; (2) which hypothesized personality-interdependence links were *not* supported by the

evidence; and (3) which personality-interdependence links have not yet been hypothesized, let alone tested. In the end, I felt invigorated by the intellectual experience. I hope that I have stimulated your interest in the subject matter of personality and close relationship processes via these preparatory comments.

Special thanks to the editorial team at Cambridge University Press for their superb efforts in helping to bring this book to life.

INTRODUCTION

During the autumn of 1989, I taught a course (or module, as it is known in the United Kingdom) on Personality and the Development of Close Relationships. This was my first course, based on a draft of the literature review for my PhD thesis, which was approximately twenty months from completion (though I did not know what my completion date would be at the time). More than a thousand miles from my home state of Texas (and in the midst of my PhD research at the University of Texas at Austin), I was teaching in Saint Paul, Minnesota (at Macalester College, thanks to a predoctoral fellowship that I had received from the Hewlett-Mellon Foundation). Little did I know at the time that I was conducting research that would largely set the stage for my academic career, or that I was teaching a course that would provide the broad framework for the present book, nearly thirty years later.

The seeds for the course on Personality and the Development of Close Relationships (and, hence, seeds for the present book) had been planted several years earlier, while I was an undergraduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington. I felt especially at home, intellectually speaking, when I took Paul Paulhus's course on Social Psychology, and William Ickes's course on Personality Psychology. However, back then, I had no idea that my dual interests in social and personality psychology would become so integral to my professional identity. I only knew that I wanted to emulate Bill Ickes, who initially became my undergraduate mentor and subsequently became my collaborator (and lifelong friend).

It turned out that Bill not only was well respected in the established fields of social psychology and personality psychology but also had made a name for himself in the upstart field of close relationships. Although I did not initially see myself as a budding relationship scientist, my search for a PhD mentor upon entry into the University of Texas at Austin eventually led me toward Ted Huston, who co-authored the now-classic *Close Relationships* (Kelley et al., 1983/2002). Ted understood my dual interests in social psychology and

personality psychology; he pointed me toward a circular or circumplex model of interpersonal traits (Kiesler, 1982) that, in turn, stimulated my interest in Harry Stack Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory of personality, Uriel Foa and Edna Foa's (1974) resource exchange theory of behavior in close relationships, and Jerry Wiggins's (1979) circumplex model and resulting research regarding interpersonal traits. No wonder that I ended up writing the present book, so many years later!

Thanks to a postdoctoral fellowship from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I had the great fortune to work under the tutelage of Caryl Rusbult, who in time would co-author *An Atlas of Interpersonal Situations* (Kelley et al., 2003). Caryl's painstaking attention to conceptual and methodological detail greatly influenced my emerging program of research, most notably the multiple-sample study that we conducted in collaboration with Harry Reis concerning attachment styles and accommodation (Gaines et al., 1997). During the years that I collaborated with Caryl and Harry, I undertook virtual crash courses in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1997, 1973/1998, 1980/1998) and interdependence theory (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). After my collaboration on the attachment styles/accommodation study with Caryl and Harry came to an end, I carried out additional studies on that topic (Gaines & Henderson, 2002; Gaines et al., 1999, 2000), resulting in what I termed a "cottage industry" of research during moments of self-deprecating, ostensibly humorous dialogues with myself(!).

I provide the foregoing information in order to give you, the reader, an insight into how the present book gradually took shape. However, the basic idea for the present book really received a jumpstart two years ago, when Christopher Agnew (who I met when he was a PhD student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and who became a dear friend and productive colleague) asked me if I would like to either write or edit a book on personality and close relationships, as part of the "Advances in Personal Relationships" series for Cambridge University Press. Chris's timing could not have been better; by then, I was in the middle of my career and had a clear idea of what I would like to see in such a book. I came up with a title (i.e., *Personality and Close Relationship Processes*) that, I intended, fully captures the spirit of my maiden course on Personality and the Development of Close Relationships. By then, I had also spent several years teaching a course on Individual Differences at Brunel University London. By the summer of 2014, I had signed the contract with Cambridge, courtesy of Hetty Marx.

Although the present book came together relatively quickly in retrospect, the writing process has been a genuine labor of love during the past year. I knew that I wanted to devote separate chapters to traits, values, attitudes, motives, and emotions. At first, I also wanted to write a chapter on moods. However, feedback from Chris Agnew and anonymous reviewers convinced me that I should drop that proposed chapter in favor of a chapter

that addressed cognition; the chapter in question morphed into a chapter on the self. The introductory and closing chapters are more “action-packed” than I had initially envisioned; I hope that those chapters effectively strike a balance between retrospective and prospective accounts of the field of relationship science as intertwined with the field of personality psychology.

The biggest challenge for me was the process of deciding which aspects of behavior (broadly construed) would serve as focal points for the influence of personality variables. Given my own background in research on accommodation (which Caryl Rusbult (1980, 1983) viewed as the most logical point of entry for personality variables within her investment model), I knew that I had much of the raw material for a book that dealt with accommodation as a “transformation of motivation” construct from the vantage point of interdependence theory (see Rusbult et al., 1991). However, once I started reviewing the literature on personality and accommodation (Chapter 1), I quickly realized that an unduly narrow focus on that particular interdependence construct would leave me unable to flesh out an entire book. Therefore, I broadened my focus sufficiently to include additional investment model variables, especially commitment and satisfaction (and, to a lesser extent, rewards and costs), that might be susceptible to personality influences.

In the process of reviewing the literature on self-referential personality variables and interdependence processes (Chapter 2), I noticed that many (if not most) of the relevant studies did not delve deeply into theories of the self (e.g., the self-theories of Cooley, 1902; James, 1890; and Mead, 1934). Consequently, the literature on self-related variables and interdependence-related variables appeared to be conceptually fragmented, with few attempts to organize the growing set of results in a systematic manner. In response to this lack of coherent interpretation of integration of results, I turned to Robins and John’s (1997) framework concerning modes of self-perception (i.e., Consistency Seeker, Scientist, Politician, and Egoist). It turned out that, in general, results of the available studies on the self and interdependence could be placed squarely within Robins and John’s framework.

With regard to the literature on traits and interdependence processes (Chapter 3), my initial impression was that two major personality theories – specifically McCrae and Costa’s (1985) version of trait theory and Sullivan’s (1953) interpersonal theory as interpreted by Wiggins (1979) – would be sufficient to interpret the results of many of the available studies. Although that impression generally was supported, studies of traits and interdependence appeared to be informed more overtly by McCrae and Costa’s trait theory (focusing on the “Big Five” traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) than by Sullivan’s *interpersonal theory* as interpreted by Wiggins (emphasizing the interpersonal traits of dominance and nurturance, both of which are related conceptually and empirically to the “Big Five” traits of extraversion and agreeableness; McCrae & Costa,

1989; Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990). Nevertheless, I found that certain key findings from studies of personality traits and interdependence (e.g., positive femininity as a significant positive predictor of accommodation; Rusbult et al., 1991) that are not obviously consistent with McCrae and Costa's five-factor theory can be readily understood from the standpoint of Sullivan's interpersonal theory (e.g., positive femininity essentially represents the positive pole of nurturance, which promotes "transformation of motivation" processes such as accommodation; see Wiggins, 1991).

Regarding the literature on values and interdependence processes (Chapter 4), I knew that *cultural* values (which presumably are communicated from societal agents to individuals; Gaines et al., 1997) had been examined as predictors of accommodation (e.g., Gaines & Ramkissoon, 2008). However, before undertaking the present review, I did not know whether values that do not clearly qualify as cultural (i.e., outside the domain of individualism, collectivism, and other "-isms"; see Gaines, 1997) had been examined at length as covariates of interdependence variables. I was surprised to find that the interpersonal values of agency and communion (perhaps better labeled as egoism and altruism; Locke, 2008) had not been considered in published empirical studies of values and interdependence. By the end of Chapter 4, I had begun to advocate future research on interpersonal values and interdependence processes, which could nicely complement existing research on interpersonal traits and relationship processes such as interdependence.

With respect to the literature on attitudes and interdependence processes (Chapter 5), I was aware of various studies that linked love styles (C. Hendrick & S. S. Hendrick, 1986) to investment model variables, especially studies by Davis and colleagues (e.g., Davis & Latty-Mann, 1987; Levy & Davis, 1988). In addition, I had the impression that attachment styles/orientations (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) could be (re)interpreted as interpersonal attitudes toward self and significant others, based on my reading of Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), among other sources. For example, the finding that anxious-ambivalent and (fearful) avoidant attachment styles undermine accommodation (Gaines et al., 1997) can be understood as the significant negative impact of negative attitudes toward self and significant others, in that order, upon accommodation. By this point, the theme of interpersonal aspects of personality (first traits, then values, and now attitudes) as potential or actual predictors of interdependence variables clearly was emerging from my review of the literature.

Regarding the literature on motives and interdependence processes (Chapter 6), I did not know what to expect, since many psychodynamic theories of personality (e.g., the psychoanalytic theory of Freud, 1923/1927; the interpersonal theory of Sullivan, 1953; and the attachment theory of Bowlby, 1969/1997) proposed individual *similarities*, not differences, in motives. However, I was familiar with Murray's (1938) personology, which defined more than

twenty motives as individual-difference constructs. It turned out that affiliative motives had been examined to some extent (e.g., Mills et al., 2004), whereas avoidance motives had been ignored, in studies of interdependence processes. I was especially surprised to learn that, despite the prominence of *power* as a construct (although often as a presumed aspect of social behavior, not necessarily as a measured aspect of personality) within interdependence theory (e.g., Kelley et al., 1983/2002, 2003), individual differences in power motives had been unexplored as potential predictors of interdependence phenomena. Finally, I learned that some research had been conducted by Sanderson and colleagues (e.g., Sanderson & Cantor, 1997, 2001; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002; Sanderson et al., 2005, Study 2) regarding interpersonal motives, especially intimacy. Again, the importance of interpersonal aspects of personality as reflected in interdependence processes was becoming clear. One issue that set apart the literature on motives – motivational and situational influences are likely to jointly determine individuals' behavior, an issue that is central in Murray's (1938) personology and in Kelley et al.'s (2003) interpersonal theory.

As for the literature on emotions and interdependence processes (Chapter 7), I found that several studies examined love (Rubin, 1973) as a covariate of interdependence-related variables (e.g., Fletcher et al. 2000; Wiegel, 2010), although the distinction between love and commitment sometimes was blurred (e.g., Panayiotou, 2005; Sternberg, 1997). Also, emotional jealousy (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2006) has been examined as a predictor of interdependence-related variables (e.g., Guerrero & Eloy, 1992). However, "state anxiety" (Carver, 2015) has not been examined in published empirical studies of interdependence processes. Finally (and consistent with the aforementioned theme of interpersonal aspects of personality as possible or actual predictors of interdependence variables), Huston (2009) commented on the "emotional climate" of marriage, which can be conceptualized by antagonism (reflecting anger due to restraint) and affection (reflecting love); in addition to the aforementioned studies of love and interdependence, Buunk and Bakker (1997) reported that "angry retreat" was related to interdependence processes. One noteworthy issue: Murray's (1938) personology casts motives as potential mediators of the effects of emotions on individuals' behavior – an intriguing, albeit untested, prospect concerning affiliative motives as mediators of emotion-interdependence links.

Finally, in an effort to tie together loose theoretical and empirical strands within the far-flung literature on personality and interdependence processes (Chapter 8), I decided to critique the foregoing review and chart directions for future research, using major schools of thought within personality psychology (i.e., trait, psychodynamic, humanistic, [neo-] behaviorist, [social-]cognitive, biological, and evolutionary) to guide my recommendations. I found that the process of making recommendations for future research generally was more straightforward for the traditional

schools of thought (i.e., trait, psychodynamic, humanistic, and [neo-] behaviorist) than it was for the newer schools of thought (i.e., [social-]cognitive, biological, and evolutionary). As Funder (2001) noted, the biological and evolutionary schools in particular have generated some of the most controversial and empirically speculative assumptions in all of personality psychology (e.g., the presumed existence of a “divorce gene”; the presumed existence of pressures toward natural selection as reflected in individual differences in behavior). An especially unfortunate tendency among some biology-oriented and evolution-oriented personality theorists, in my opinion, has been the tendency to associate group differences in race with individual differences in personality – a not-infrequent trend that has little to no basis in scientific fact (Fairchild, 1991; Fairchild et al., 1995; Yee et al., 1993). As such, I encourage future researchers to exercise caution particularly in (over-)relying on biological and evolutionary theories as presumed explanations for observed differences in interdependence-related behavior.