

Close Relationships

HAROLD H. KELLEY, ELLEN BERSCHIED,
ANDREW CHRISTENSEN, JOHN H. HARVEY,
TED L. HUSTON, GEORGE LEVINGER,
EVIE McCLINTOCK, LETITIA ANNE PEPLAU,
and DONALD R. PETERSON



W. H. FREEMAN AND COMPANY

New York San Francisco

The Emerging Science of Relationships

ELLEN BERSCHEID and LETITIA ANNE PEPLAU

Relationships with others lie at the very core of human existence. Humans are conceived within relationships, born into relationships, and live their lives within relationships with others. Each individual's dependence on other people—for the realization of life itself, for survival during one of the longest gestation periods in the animal kingdom, for food and shelter and aid and comfort throughout the life cycle—is a fundamental fact of the human condition.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS IN HUMAN LIFE

Most people are acutely aware that their relationships play a crucial role in shaping the character of their lives. Klinger (1977) found that almost all respondents to the question "What is it that makes your life meaningful?" said that friends were important, most mentioned parents or siblings or relationships with opposite-sex partners or with their own children, and most also mentioned the importance of "feeling loved and wanted." In contrast, less than half said that occupational success or religious faith was an important source of meaning to them.

It is not surprising, then, that people also believe that their personal

happiness is integrally bound to the state of their intimate relationships. In a national survey, A. Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) found that most people consider it very important to have "a happy marriage," "a good family life," and "good friends." Less importance was given to work, housing, religious faith, and financial security. Other studies of what people believe is crucial to their well-being and happiness find similar results. For example, Freedman (1978) concluded from two large-scale surveys of factors associated with happiness:

There is no simple recipe for producing happiness, but all of the research indicates that for almost everyone one necessary ingredient is some kind of satisfying, intimate relationship. Sex is not far behind in importance, and marriage, that venerable institution that is to some extent a combination of the two, is still, despite all the changes in our attitudes, a crucial factor in many people's happiness. People who are lucky enough to be happy in love, sex, and marriage are more likely to be happy with life in general than any other people. Those who are unhappy in this aspect of their lives are the least likely to have found general happiness. (p. 48)

That close relationships are indeed vital to well-being has been increasingly corroborated in recent years by research on factors associated with mental and physical health and longevity. For example, from their review of available data, Bloom, Asher, and White (1978) concluded that there is "an unequivocal association between marital disruption and physical and emotional disorder" (p. 886). Divorced adults are at severely greater risk for mental and physical illness, automobile accidents, alcoholism, and suicide. The mortality rate of divorced white American men under 65 as opposed to their married counterparts, to take just one comparison, is double for strokes and lung cancer, 10 times as high for tuberculosis, 7 times as high for cirrhosis of the liver, and double for stomach cancer, according to the American Council of Life Insurance (1978). Premature death from heart disease, too, is significantly more frequent among the "loneliness-prone"—the divorced, widowed, and single, both old and young (Lynch, 1977). In fact, people who lacked social and community ties were found to be twice as likely to die from any cause during a 9-year period as were people who had such relationships (Berkman & Syme, 1979). Studies directly assessing feelings of loneliness and social isolation further document the harmful consequences of deficient social relationships (see review by Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

People's personal relationships have implications that extend far beyond those directly experienced by the individuals themselves. Our lives are shaped not only by our own relationships, but also by those of other people. For example, the social and economic costs of divorce affect the entire society. The consequences of premarital sex and teenage pregnancy influence not only the adolescent parents and their children, but also social welfare programs and the community at large. In international relations, personal

diplomacy and friendship between world leaders can change the course of history. The effectiveness of military combat units and of sports teams is influenced by the strength of group solidarity. On the job, personal relations among workers influence morale and productivity. All human society has a stake in the nature of people's close relationships. We all benefit from the existence of successful relationships and share, at least indirectly, the costs of relationship deficiencies.

Family Relationships

The family has a special place in thinking about close relationships. Family relationships are central to human existence, health, and happiness—a fact that is almost universally recognized. Over 90 percent of all Americans marry at some time in their life, and most people spend most of their adult life in a husband-wife relationship. In the family are found the very prototypes of the close relationship—the relationship between parent and child and the relationship between husband and wife. The family is also an important unit of social structure, a point widely acknowledged by American political leaders. As President Carter observed in convening the White House Conference on Families (1980), the family is "the foundation of American society and its most important institution," or, as President Reagan (1981) declared, "Work and family are at the center of our lives; the foundation of our dignity as a free people" (p. 4).

It is not surprising that family relations have often been the focus of public discussions of close relationships, or that scientific investigations of close relationships have so often examined the family. In recent years, interest in family relations has been spurred by dramatic changes in the character of the American family. These changes have given added impetus to public concern about the health of the family and provide a general sociohistorical context for the examination of close relationships in this book.

The traditional portrait of the American family (Skolnick, 1978) depicts the family as living comfortably in a single-family house in suburbia provided by the ambitious husband who sprints off each morning to his job, leaving behind his contented wife who prides herself on being an excellent homemaker and mother. Both husband and wife are confident that their relationship, founded on love and mutual understanding, will last until death does them part, and each works hard to create a happy home life for themselves and their two children, basically good kids who honor, love, and obey their parents as they struggle with the normal pains of growing up.

Although it is commonly assumed that this family pattern is fundamental to the American way of life, the so-called "traditional" American family is actually a relatively recent social invention that emerged in the 19th century (Ryan, 1979). In earlier times, the family was first and foremost an economic

unit in which husband, wife, and children engaged in productive labor. Affection was less likely to be the basis of marriage (Degler, 1980), and the relationships among family members were considerably more formal, less companionate, and less child-centered than today (Gadlin, 1977). In the 19th century, however, the site of economic production shifted from the household, in which all family members contributed, to a physically separate workplace for each spouse. Increased specialization in the roles of husband and wife was the result, with the husband taking over the primary economic role as provider (Bernard, 1981b), thereby reducing his participation in childrearing and family life. As the wife's relative economic contribution to the family decreased, greater emphasis was given to her specialized skills in childcare and homemaking (Bernard, 1981a). In sum, "in the nineteenth century, popular culture for the first time deemed 'work' a male prerogative and in turn glorified the woman for her domestic and maternal functions" (Ryan, 1979, p. xvi).

The "traditional" American family composed of a breadwinner husband and a homemaker wife appears to have reached its cultural zenith in the 1950s (Skolnick, 1978), when it was frequently portrayed in the mass media in such television shows as *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Father Knows Best*. These depictions of family life exalted the virtues of family loyalty, love, and "togetherness." They also portrayed, often amusingly, relationship problems that, in retrospect, have an appealing simplicity. Parents worried about comforting their teenage daughter who failed to be elected homecoming queen or about telling their son the "facts of life"—not about their daughter's pregnancy or their son's arrest for selling drugs. Family crises involved dad's bringing the boss home for dinner or mom's upcoming speech to the garden club—not his alcoholism or her extramarital affair and certainly not their battle for custody of the children.

Idealized images of the American family represent the standard against which contemporary family relationships are often judged—and come up short. Family relationships in the United States today are straining to accommodate a divorce rate that has increased 700 percent since the turn of the century, with most of this increase occurring in the past two decades (Glick & Norton, 1977; Levinger & Moles, 1979). In 1978 alone, there were roughly a million divorces in the nation (Spanier, 1981), and the United States currently leads the world in the rate of divorce (United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1982). Although this rate shows signs of leveling off, it has been estimated that about 40 percent of recent marriages will end in divorce (Glick & Norton, 1977). Thus, the dissolution of the husband-wife relationship, once a social rarity, is now commonplace.

Other far-reaching changes in the relations between husband and wife and between parent and child are reflected in the fact that American women have entered the paid labor force in ever-increasing proportions (Almquist, 1977;

Bane, 1976). Until the middle of this century, most women, if they worked at all for wages, did so before marriage or after the loss of a husband. In 1940, only 15 percent of married women worked for pay. By 1960, however, that figure had more than doubled, and, by 1975, 44 percent of married women were in the work force. Today, the figure is over 50 percent. This change has occurred not only among mothers with grown children but also among mothers of small children. As a result, only 16 percent of American families today fit the traditional image of a family consisting of a husband as sole wage earner, a wife as homemaker, and their children (H. S. Ross & Sawhill, 1975).

Alternative Relationships

Still other major changes in the social form and presumed substance of many close relationships have occurred. Several of these are reflected in dramatically increased sexual freedom. In the 1950s, for example, the sexual double standard was firmly entrenched. Whereas men were accorded greater sexual latitude both before and after marriage, "nice girls" maintained chastity before and fidelity afterwards. Thus, Americans were shocked to learn from Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Gebhard's (1953) landmark study that half of the married women surveyed had experienced premarital coitus (although often only with their future husband) and that over 25 percent of wives had had an extramarital affair by age 40. The public had been less surprised or distressed to learn in an earlier volume (Kinsey et al., 1948) that most men had had premarital coitus and half had had an extramarital affair.

In the 30 years since Kinsey et al.'s research, sexual attitudes and behavior have become increasingly permissive. The majority of young people today believe that premarital sex is acceptable for both women and men, especially in a "love" relationship (DeLora, Warren, & Ellison, 1981; M. Hunt, 1974). The actual incidence of premarital coitus has increased, most notably since 1965 (Hopkins, 1977). In 1980, about 75 percent of women and 90 percent of men were estimated to have had sexual intercourse prior to marriage (Reiss, 1980). For both sexes, age at first intercourse has substantially decreased, while the average number of premarital partners has increased.

Cohabitation between men and women has also increased. Between 1970 and 1979, the number of unmarried couples sharing living quarters more than doubled (Glick & Spanier, 1981), with a 41 percent increase in just the brief period from 1977 to 1979 (Spanier, 1981). Roughly half of all cohabiting couples are never-married adults, most of whom will eventually marry either their current partner or someone else, and 30 percent are divorced persons who will ultimately remarry. But, as the rise in cohabitation suggests, more and more persons are experimenting with alternative life styles—"alternative," that is, to traditional marriage (see Yankelovich, 1981).

Proponents of "swinging," "open marriage," child-free marriage, perpetual singledom, homosexual relationships, and so on have campaigned actively for increased social acceptance, with at least some success.

These statistics provide only the barest skeleton of some of the changes that have taken place in family relationships in recent years. Behind the statistics are millions of individuals who are currently experiencing fundamental changes in the ways they relate to other people. The rapidity of these changes suggests that basic aspects of American social life are in transition, and the end is not yet in sight. Americans are of two minds about the meaning of social changes in the family. Some, perhaps those who most value stability and security, interpret change in an imagery of decline, destruction, and loss. Characteristic are newspaper headlines lamenting that "census shows families are a dwindling species." Others, however, perhaps those who thrive on novelty and independence, view social change in terms of growth and positive movement toward a better life. There is probably some truth to both positions. Social changes often occur as solutions to old problems, but in turn create new problems of their own. Thus, divorce is a solution to individuals' desire to escape from an unsatisfactory marriage, but divorce raises new dilemmas about the stress of relationship dissolution and of life in single-parent families. Women's paid employment lessens the financial worries of many families and permits greater self-expression for women who find full-time homemaking stifling, but working wives create new problems of childcare and the realignment of responsibilities and power in the family. The diversity of family types creates greater options for individuals who feel dissatisfied in traditional marriage, but creates a greater need for public tolerance of diversity.

Current variations in family patterns and the increase of alternative relationship forms make it useful for researchers to expand their focus from "the family" to a more general examination of close relationships. The context of social change adds impetus to the quest for knowledge about relationships and lends a sense of urgency to the enterprise. The diversity in close relationships today also facilitates investigations of relationship dynamics. As Lewin observed (cited in Deutsch, 1954), the best time to study a phenomenon is when it is in the process of change, for it is when an entity is moving and changing that its dynamics reveal themselves most clearly.

This book reflects our belief, shared by others in the behavioral and social sciences, that many of the answers to questions now insistently raised about close relationships ultimately lie in the development of a science of relationships. Such a science will incorporate a body of knowledge about human relationships that can account for the varying forms that relationships take and will identify the forces that shape and are shaped by personal relationships.

A SCIENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The desire to understand close relationships is probably as old as humankind. "It seems likely that people have been listening to each other's family problems and responding with commiseration and advice as long as there have been families" (Broderick & Schrader, 1981, p. 5). Poets, philosophers, and religious leaders have long commented on human relations and offered prescriptions for interpersonal conduct. What is relatively new is the effort to study close relationships scientifically, to replace casual observation and intuition with systematic data collection and theory building.

One barrier to the development of a science of relationships has been a long-standing social taboo against systematic investigations of close relationships. For example, as sociologists E. W. Burgess and Wallin (1953) observed, prior to the First World War, most people refused to answer questions about their marital relationships, considering the topic too intimate, personal, and sacred to be discussed. Even as recently as the 1950s,

love and marriage were regarded as belonging to the field of romance, not of science. The theory of romantic love held full sway, the predominant view was that in some mysterious, mystic and even providential way a person was attracted to his or her pre-destinate . . . that young people fell in love, married, and lived happily ever afterwards, as the result of some mystic attraction. Even when marriages turned out unhappily, the disillusioned explained their failures as being due to their having mistaken infatuation for love. Or else they placed the blame on bad luck or fate. (E. W. Burgess & Wallin, 1953, p. 11)

Today, however, there is much greater public interest in and support for scientific studies of relationships. Indeed, the popularity of books and articles on love, sex, marriage, and parenting; the continuing appeal of workshops on intimacy; and the increasing use of couples counseling all demonstrate that Americans are eager for factual information about close relationships.

The Interdisciplinary Origins of a Science of Relationships

A science of close relationships will be enriched by research and theory from many disciplines. Because relationships are shaped by their social environment, the work of anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists is important in describing and explaining variations in relationships across time and space. Because human relationships are influenced by each individual's biological capacities and predispositions, the work of biologists, ethologists, and other life scientists is also essential. Current work on the biological bases of attachment and dominance and on the evolutionary functions of altruism and parental involvement in the care of the young illustrate research that

may provide new insights into human relations. At present, however, the groundwork for a science of human relationships has been most fully developed in the fields of sociology, marriage and family therapy, and psychology.

Sociology

Sociology has traditionally devoted much attention to social relationships. For example, Durkheim's (1897/1951) classic study of suicide presented the first evidence that marriage and social integration provide the individual immunity against suicide. In 1909, Cooley (1909/1962) drew attention to the "incomparable" influence primary groups have on people's lives. Sociologists have continued to examine social relationships in two major ways, the first focusing on the processes of social interaction and the second examining the social institution of marriage and the family.

With respect to social interaction, at least four major sociological perspectives can be distinguished. Structural functionalism (e.g., Merton, 1968; Parsons & Bales, 1955) examines how various components of society, such as the family, the educational system, and the economy, are interrelated and how each helps maintain the larger social system. Social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961) analyzes social interaction in terms of such concepts as rewards, costs, and investments. Symbolic interactionism (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980) emphasizes how people define social situations, give meaning to their own actions and to those of others, and create and negotiate roles in social interaction. Finally, a conflict perspective (e.g., Coser, 1954; Simmel, 1955) assumes that conflicts of interest occur not only between groups but also within them and focuses on such questions as who benefits from existing social patterns.

In addition to these efforts, sociologists have been especially interested in the institution of marriage and the family. Family research has grown prodigiously in the past 20 years (see Berardo, 1980), as illustrated by the fact that the National Council on Family Relations recently established a computerized data bank on family resources containing nearly 35,000 citations. Today, family research investigates a broad range of topics, including linkages between the family and the larger society, as seen in the effects of social class, urbanism, and industrialization on family life, and studies of sex roles, family violence, and nontraditional family forms, to name just a few current endeavors by sociologists to understand close relationships.

Marriage and family therapy

The field of marriage and family therapy has also made important contributions to our knowledge of close relationships. The early roots of relationship-oriented therapy can be found in the social work movement, the

family life education movement, the work of pioneering "sexologists," and the development of social psychiatry (see historical reviews by Broderick & Schrader, 1981; Guerin, 1976; Kaslow, 1980; Olson, 1971). By the 1920s, physicians, lawyers, educators, and other professionals began to engage in marriage counseling as an adjunct to their regular practice. In the 1950s, professionals, many trained in analytic theory, began to formulate specific therapeutic approaches, including "conjoint marital therapy" (Jackson, 1959) involving both spouses and "family group therapy" involving the entire family. In the last 25 years, therapeutic work with couples and families has undergone extraordinary growth (Gurman & Kniskern, 1981). Today there is increasing agreement in the field that the family is best conceived as a social system, that relationship variables are critical to understanding the family, and that the observation of actual family interaction is often essential to successful intervention.

Work in marital and family therapy has generated new concepts, such as psychological symbiosis, pseudo-mutuality, and the double bind. Advances in theory development, perhaps most notably in family systems theory (e.g., Holman & Burr, 1980; Kantor & Lehr, 1975) have also been made. Therapy-oriented research has expanded in recent years and has become considerably more rigorous. For example, Patterson, Weiss, and others at the University of Oregon (e.g., Patterson, Reid, Jones, & Conger, 1975, and R. L. Weiss, Hops, & Patterson, 1973) have combined a family systems approach with a behavioral learning approach to study problems of aggression in children and of distress in married couples. Raush, Barry, Hertel, and Swain (1974) have examined patterns of interaction among couples in conflict situations. More recently, Gottman (1979) has used techniques of sequential analysis to investigate marital interaction. The burgeoning discipline of marriage and family therapy, which combines the efforts of sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, and others, constitutes one vital contributor to the developing science of relationships.

Psychology

Psychology is a third major contributor to the development of a science of relationships. Much of its contribution is currently indirect and lies in its effort to identify and understand the nature of the human animal. Such knowledge is fundamental to understanding human relationships for, as ethologist Hinde (1979) observes, one animal's responses to another and, therefore, many of the regularities in their interaction over time, are heavily determined by the mental and physical features, processes, and capabilities of the animal. In turn, of course, since many human characteristics are determined by the nature of social relationships, the knowledge contributed by a science of relationships is ultimately critical to the full development of

psychology as well as many other of the behavioral and biological sciences.

Apart from this basic contribution to an understanding of human relationships, several subdisciplines of psychology have focused directly on relational phenomena. The contributions of clinical and counseling psychologists to marital and family therapy have been mentioned. Developmental psychology is increasingly examining the role that relationships play in human growth and development (e.g., Rubin & Hartup, *in press*). Special attention has always been given to the child-parent relationship and its effects on the child (e.g., Bowlby, 1973), but recent efforts to understand socialization have recognized that the direction of influence in such relationships is not unilateral. Thus, psychologists have sought to understand the mutual influence and interaction patterns between the child and its caretakers (e.g., Bell, 1968). In addition, the contribution of other early relationships, especially peer relations, to children's social and emotional growth and development is currently the focus of much investigative effort (e.g., Asher & Gottman, 1981; Hartup, 1983). As this focus implies, there is also an emerging interest among developmental psychologists in examining relationships *per se*, even apart from identifying their specific effects on individual development.

Social psychology, often regarded as the study of social influence and encompassing such traditional lines of inquiry as social power, attitude change, and social cognition, also engages questions of social relationships. Like other areas of psychology, however, social psychology often has taken the "individualistic" view of social phenomena (see Steiner, 1974). This view tends, first, to focus on the causes and consequences of a single person's responses to social stimuli at a single point in time and, second, to attribute the causes of individual responses to factors within the person rather than to factors in the social and physical environment. At least two major exceptions to this individualistic emphasis in social psychology exist, however. The first can be traced to the work of Lewin (1948), who viewed behavior as importantly influenced not only by the characteristics of the individual but also by the interaction between the individual and the environment. This "field" approach to human behavior, in which a change in any one part of the field reverberates to change other portions of the field, can be seen in Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) influential analysis of behavior in social relationships. A second exception has been a continuing interest by social psychologists in interpersonal attraction (see reviews by Berscheid, *in press-a*; Huston & Levinger, 1978). Recently, this line of inquiry has expanded to emphasize the processes of relationship formation, maintenance, and dissolution, and to investigate such relationship phenomena as self-disclosure, equity, power, and conflict (e.g., R. L. Burgess & Huston, 1979; Duck & Gilmour, 1981; Levinger & Raush, 1977).

THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIPS

The sheer variety of sources that contribute to an understanding of close relationships has created obstacles to the development of a science of relationships. No two disciplines approach the analysis of relationships in precisely the same way or focus on precisely the same things. Each discipline differs importantly in the theoretical framework it brings to a relationship issue. Each framework operates as a lens through which a topic is viewed. As a consequence, even the same phenomena are frequently perceived in very different ways within different disciplines. Disciplinary differences in terminology, theoretical orientations, and levels of analysis can produce a situation in which "the conceptual jungle chokes the unwary" (Hinde, 1979, p. 6). It is to this central problem, the conceptual analysis of relationships, that our efforts in this book have principally been addressed.

The bedrock on which any science rests is observation and description of the phenomena of interest. Since descriptive analysis necessarily precedes causal analysis, we have emphasized its importance to an ultimate understanding of close relationships in each of the chapters to follow. Description provides the basis for a comprehensive causal analysis of relationship phenomena.

Descriptive Analysis

Description requires a descriptive language, commonly understood and tied to observables, that can be used to represent symbolically the phenomena of interest. A central problem that has impeded the development of a science of relationships is not the absence of a descriptive language, but rather that there are too many descriptive languages for relationships. Each of us in our daily lives uses an extensive "common sense" language to discuss relationship phenomena. Each discipline that treats the subject has also developed its own language of relationships that is heavily influenced by the terminology, concepts, constructs, and theories traditional to that discipline and to its particular focus on relational phenomena. Even subdisciplines within disciplines can vary considerably in the words used to describe a single relationship phenomenon.

When all of these languages meet under one interdisciplinary roof, it becomes painfully apparent that there is no one commonly understood descriptive language of relationships. Further, even the most skilled and dedicated efforts to translate between languages are all too often doomed to failure. First, the words in one language frequently have no clearly specified referents. Second, even when referents are specified, they frequently are not

tied to observables, but rather only to other concepts and abstractions that themselves often have unspecified or nonempirical referents.

This problem is readily apprehended when one simply considers the variety of definitions and meanings currently given the word *relationship* and its qualifier *close*. Such words as *love*, *trust*, *commitment*, *caring*, *stability*, *attachment*, *one-ness*, *meaningful*, and *significant*, along with a host of others, flicker in and out of the numerous conceptions of what a "close relationship" is. The words used to explain the phrase *close relationship* often carry clouds of ambiguity, and so people are not infrequently driven to concrete single-case illustrations or to highly abstract analogies and metaphors to try to communicate what they mean by the term, often with little success. When investigators cannot agree on an issue so fundamental as when two people are in a "relationship" with one another, or on the basis for classifying a relationship as "close" versus "not close," then the development of a systematic body of knowledge about close human relationships becomes problematic indeed.

To circumvent these problems, we collectively agreed that our first task must be to identify the concepts that appear to be necessary and fundamental to the description of relationships, regardless of the disciplinary perspective, special interests, and other particulars of a specific investigator. Our approach to this task was to identify the basic data of relationships—the nature of the events that necessarily must be described and subsequently causally analyzed if relationships are to be understood. This approach quickly led to a consideration of the basic meaning of the word *relationship*.

When the myriad conceptions and usages of the term *relationship* are collected and carefully compared, it becomes apparent that the term essentially refers to the fact that two people are in a relationship with one another if they have impact on each other, if they are "interdependent" in the sense that a change in one person causes a change in the other and vice versa. Thus, as we discuss in Chapter 2, "Analyzing Close Relationships," the study of relationships is concerned with the interdependence between two people—with describing the quantity and quality of that interdependence over time and with identifying the causal factors that both affect and are affected by that interdependence.

It follows, then, that the basic data of relationships, the facts that must be recorded, described, and ultimately understood, concern the ways in which two people affect each other. These data must (1) identify the activities (e.g., the thoughts, feelings, actions) of each person that affect and are affected by the activities (thoughts, feelings, actions, and so on) of the other and (2) specify the nature of the effects of each person's activities on those of the other. In order to do the latter, that is, to identify the causal connections between the two persons' activities, it is necessary that observations be made

of the pair over a considerable time period. Only in this way can a determination be made of which activities of each person are consistently affected by those of the other. Thus, the description must provide details of the temporal sequence of the two persons' activities. In brief, the descriptive analysis of relationships focuses on describing the number, nature, and temporal patterning of the interconnected activities that form the substance of social relationships.

Descriptive analysis necessarily precedes the classification of relationships into types, for example, as "close" or "not close." Classification presumes the observation and description of a series of interconnections and the assessment of certain of their properties. Precisely what properties of the interconnected pattern an observer will regard as important depends on the observer and the aims of the investigation. Chapter 2 outlines a number of properties that we believe many will regard as important.

For the purposes of this volume, the basis for classifying a relationship as "close" assumed special importance. Such a classification must be made on the basis of certain properties of the interaction pattern. We believe that a relationship may be profitably described as "close" if the amount of mutual impact two people have on each other is great or, in other words, if there is high interdependence. A high degree of interdependence between two people is revealed in four properties of their interconnected activities: (1) the individuals have *frequent* impact on each other, (2) the degree of impact per each occurrence is *strong*, (3) the impact involves *diverse* kinds of activities for each person, and (4) all of these properties characterize the interconnected activity series for a relatively long *duration* of time.

Whether or not the reader agrees with this classification scheme and the rationale presented in the next chapter that supports it, it should be understood that this is the referent for *close* used throughout this book. *Close*, as we use the term, is virtually synonymous with *influential*; people in close relationships have a great deal of impact on each other. Whether the impact is for good or ill for the individuals involved is a separate issue from classifying the relationship as close or not. So, too, is the question of whether the two people subjectively feel close or verbally report that they are close. There is little doubt that through interaction the individuals involved develop beliefs about their relationship (e.g., whether it is "close" or "superficial" or "happy" or "destructive") and about the partner (e.g., whether he or she is "sincere" or "loving"). The degree of correspondence between the participants' beliefs about the relationship and an investigator's description of the properties of actual relationship activities encompasses a large set of interesting questions. However, Chapter 2 emphasizes that, to be useful, relationship descriptors must ultimately be tied to properties of the interconnected activity pattern that can be recorded and agreed on by impartial investigators.

Causal Analysis

When a relationship is observed for a long time, there ordinarily will be detected certain regularities in the patterning of interconnected activities and, on certain occasions, major changes in these patterns will also be observed. It is these regularities and changes in interaction patterns that a science of relationships must ultimately predict and explain. Chapter 2 addresses this issue of causal analysis. As we elaborate, a causal analysis of interaction regularities requires the inference of relatively stable "causal conditions" that act on the relationship to produce and maintain these regularities. Similarly, an explanation of change in an interaction pattern requires the identification of changes that have taken place in previous stable causal conditions. For example, a descriptive analysis of one couple might reveal that, while one partner virtually always accedes to the requests of the other, the other rarely does so. A number of causal conditions may be tentatively invoked to account for this regularity, ranging from one person's greater "power," stemming from an ability to affect the other's economic outcomes, to "social norms" that prescribe deference on the part of the compliant person, or to such personality dispositions as "nurturance" or "autonomy." Each of these tentative explanations carries the implication that if the presumed causal condition changes (e.g., one person loses his or her source of income), then the interaction pattern will also change.

The sheer number and variety of causal conditions that may be invoked to explain specific regularities in interaction in close relationships stretches toward the infinite. Causal conditions may, however, be classified into several major groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are *personal* causes, e.g., relatively enduring characteristics of the individuals, such as their personality traits or abilities. When an interaction regularity reflects a particular combination of the dispositions of the two persons (e.g., a "nurturant" individual paired with a "succorant" other), or when the activity pattern is the product of their interaction (e.g., a particular mutual understanding or shared expectation that the two have evolved), we refer to *relational* causes. Finally, *environmental* causes refer either to features of the social environment or of the physical environment within which the relationship is embedded. Causal explanations that invoke such factors as "societal norms" or the "restrictive living quarters" shared by participants in a relationship are examples.

Thus, a relationship's causal context is formed by the dispositions of each person, by factors emerging from their combination or interaction, and by features of the social and physical environment. The interplay between two or more causal conditions, both within and across types, is, of course, frequently presumed to be responsible for many of the regularities of relationship patterns. It is doubtful, in fact, that any interaction pattern can be fully

explained without reference to factors in all of the types of causal conditions and their interplay with one another.

The framework we present in Chapter 2 is intended to provide a general basis for the description and causal analysis of human relationships. In major part, all of the chapters that follow are concrete illustrations, elaborations, and extensions of that core chapter to various aspects of close relationships. The basic framework of Chapter 2 transcends, we believe, any one specific theory, any particular disciplinary perspective, and any single relationship phenomenon. Choices about theory, disciplinary approach, and topic are at the discretion of the individual investigator and must be made before any specific investigation can proceed. In contrast, we believe that the basic framework itself is not so discretionary and is largely dictated by the common principles and assumptions that underly all scientific endeavors. A careful reading of Chapter 2 is, thus, critical for understanding all of the topical discussions in the chapters that follow.

TOPICS IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Certain relationship phenomena have traditionally captured more attention than others, and, similarly, certain causal factors have been thought to account for more of the regularities in interaction patterns than others. In the remaining chapters of this book, we discuss some of the substantive and methodological issues that are currently of special interest to those attempting to understand close relationships. Although the range of topics we cover is broad, it is not at all encyclopedic. The necessity of limiting discussion to some issues and to specific facets of those issues at the expense of others was keenly felt. For this reason, each of the chapters should be considered not as a comprehensive review of the topic but rather as largely illustrative of the kind of conceptual analysis that each topic seems to require and of the kinds of approaches that currently seem promising.

Interaction

In Chapter 3, "Interaction," McClintock examines the ways in which social scientists have typically observed, recorded, and analyzed overt behavioral events to provide descriptions of the changes and regularities in activity patterns over time. This chapter also considers the covert cognitive activities that take place when people interact and that, together with affective and overt behavioral activities, comprise the dynamic process of interaction. In addition to demonstrating the importance of interactional analysis for any systematic understanding of relationships, this chapter also discusses some of the causal factors that may account for the recurring activity patterns that typically characterize close relationships.

Emotion

In Chapter 4, "Emotion," Berscheid discusses some of the problems and possibilities involved in understanding emotional phenomena as they occur—and sometimes inexplicably fail to occur—in close relationships. Close relationships are, of course, generally recognized to be the setting for the most dramatic and intense of human emotions. Unfortunately, the popular association between emotional experience and close relationships is most often manifested in the tendency to define a "close" relationship as one characterized by strong positive emotional experiences. We argue, however, that both the intensity and the positivity of an individual's emotional experiences in a relationship are inadequate and misleading indices of the closeness of the relationship. Using our conception of closeness and what is known about the dynamics of emotion, Chapter 4 introduces the concept of "emotional investment," this being the potential, rather than the actuality, of experiencing intense positive or negative emotion in a relationship. The chapter also discusses a number of other factors involved in the prediction and understanding of emotional phenomena within relationships.

Power

The concept of power is frequently invoked to explain a wide variety of relationship interaction patterns, yet this fundamental concept has been used in diverse and contradictory ways. In Chapter 5, "Power," Huston draws on the conceptual framework of Chapter 2 to clarify how previous researchers have used the concept and to provide a more comprehensive analysis of power. Huston examines patterns of influence in the momentary give and take of interaction and considers the causal conditions that enable one person to exercise power or intentional influence over another. The chapter concludes with a discussion of husband and wife decision making in marriage and of influence processes in parent-child interaction.

Roles and Gender

Close relationships are characterized by relatively consistent and comprehensive patterns of activity or roles. The distinctive roles of husband and wife are illustrative of such patterns. In Chapter 6, "Roles and Gender," Peplau uses the conceptual framework from Chapter 2 to describe the general nature of roles in close relationships and to outline the types of causal condition that influence role patterns. This conceptualization of roles is contrasted with previous perspectives on roles. To illustrate the description and causal analysis of roles, the chapter provides a detailed discussion of gender-based roles in dating and marriage and considers several explanations for gender-based role specialization.

Love and Commitment

Love and commitment, the focus of Chapter 7, are surely among the most frequently used words in discussions of close relationships. Each carries, however, a wide variety of meanings, both in popular parlance and among theorists and investigators. In this chapter, Kelley draws a distinction between love and commitment, showing the partial overlap between the two concepts that has led to confusion in their usage. Love and commitment are each analyzed in terms of the observable phenomena believed to be their characteristic manifestations, the current causes believed to be responsible for these observed phenomena, and various ideas about their origins and developmental course. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how such complex phenomena as love and commitment can be dissected in terms of the basic conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 in order to reduce their current ambiguities and to direct further theoretical and empirical effort.

Development and Change

Few issues are as challenging as those posed by an examination of the temporal development of close relationships. In Chapter 8, "Development and Change," Levinger proposes a temporal sequence for analyzing relationship development, beginning with acquaintance and ending with deterioration and termination of the relationship. The chapter considers the factors that may propel a relationship from a mere acquaintanceship to the high degree of interdependence characteristic of a close relationship. The fact that there are multiple influences on the developmental course of relationships is emphasized, along with the fact that there are multiple paths to increasing and decreasing interdependence. As part of this discussion, the chapter reexamines certain classic issues in relationship formation, such as filter models of mate selection and the importance of personality complementarity, and also discusses the impact of such events as parenthood and serious illness on relationship development.

Conflict

In Chapter 9, "Conflict," Peterson discusses some of the conditions that influence the initiation of conflictual interactions, as well as the conditions that affect the avoidance versus engagement of conflict and its escalation or resolution. Five possible outcomes of conflict, from separation of the partners to structural improvement of the relationship, are discussed. The function of conflict in the development of relationships is also considered, and ways in which patterns of progressive alienation or relationship growth may become established are illustrated. Finally, ways in which unnecessary conflicts can be reduced and other conflicts may be put to constructive use are suggested.

Intervention

Conflict, especially in marriage, often drives partners to seek outside intervention to improve and preserve their relationship. Intervention presupposes that a descriptive analysis of the relationship has been made, that the causal conditions responsible for current interaction patterns have been identified, and that these conditions can be effectively changed or modified through available intervention procedures. In Chapter 10, "Intervention," Christensen presents a conceptual analysis of dysfunction in close relationships. He also examines the treatment of relationship dysfunction, addressing issues of the client-therapist relationship, the assessment of close relationships, and intervention strategies used to alter those relationships. Current approaches to the treatment of distressed relationships are selectively reviewed, including those that focus on intervention with the individual, with both partners, and with the social environment. The chapter concludes with a brief review of the empirical literature and a discussion of the implications of our conceptual framework for clinical work with distressed relationships.

Research Methods

Methodological issues are raised throughout this volume. Such issues are unavoidable and central to an understanding of close relationships, since the adequacy of our methods determines the extent of our knowledge. In Chapter 11, "Research Methods," Harvey, Christensen, and McClintock discuss the major methods currently available for descriptive and causal analysis of relationships. Several observational and participant-report strategies for describing close relationships are discussed; the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches are examined using the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. Turning to causal analysis, correlational and experimental designs and several variations of these classic strategies are discussed and illustrated. The chapter uses the framework from Chapter 2 to illustrate that major questions about close relationships can be examined with existing methodologies. The chapter concludes by noting the reciprocal ties between methodological and substantive research.

A Science of Relationships

It can be argued that the development of a science of relationships is important not only in its own right, but because it is essential to progress in related sciences such as psychology and sociology. In Chapter 12, "Epilogue: An Essential Science," Kelley makes a case for this view. The framework of Chapter 2 and several research examples are used to show that close relationships must be taken into account if the dynamics of psychological and social

change are fully to be understood. Furthermore, this understanding of the influence of close relationships, whether on the individual or on the society, requires that internal relationship dynamics be determined through longitudinal investigations of interaction processes.

The epilogue highlights again, as do many of the earlier chapters, the great need for painstaking descriptive analysis. At the same time, it is clear that the idea of dealing with time-series data, with the emergent properties of relationships, and with the reality that in ongoing relationships each variable is both independent and dependent—that many variables act and interact to affect each other and, then, ultimately themselves—is an alien idea to many of us. Further, in our roles as editors and peer reviewers, many of us traditionally have derogated the value of simple description and have placed a high premium on causal analysis, so high a premium, in fact, that causal analysis is sometimes encouraged even when it is premature. Along with new methodologies, new technologies, and new theories, perhaps some of us will also need a new attitude—about what we can determine and about how fast and how precisely we can determine it.

The quest to solve the mysteries of close relationships is a formidable task. This book may sensitize readers, even those who have long grappled with relationship issues, to the enormity of the effort of developing a science of relationships. But, against the difficulties that surround it, there lies the guarantee that the work is worthy of the effort it demands. No attempt to understand human behavior, in the individual case or in the collective, will be wholly successful until we understand the close relationships that form the foundation and theme of the human condition.

It is our hope that the reader of this volume will acquire not only an appreciation for the complex outlines of a science of close relationships, but also a sense that the task before us is "do-able"—not soon, and certainly not by any one discipline, but ultimately through the concerted efforts of many investigators. The emergence of a science of relationships represents a new frontier—perhaps even the last major frontier—in the study of humankind. The uncertainties and frustrations of exploration in this domain are surely matched by the excitement, the challenge, and the satisfaction of discoveries about familiar, yet little understood, phenomena.