

# 1

---

## *Old and New Ways of Seeing Relationships*

**I**f this book “works,” then by the time you reach the end of it, you will think about relationships in an entirely new way.

That is a very large claim. In order to justify it, I must first prove that I have some idea of what you think about relationships at the moment. Then I need to show how I expect to change it, so that I make it worth your reading further. (I suppose I also have to convince you why my opinion is relevant. This book is not all about me, I assure you, but the publishers asked me to mention that in 1982, I cofounded the first ever international conference on personal relationships; in 1984, I launched the first ever journal on relationships [*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*] and edited it for 15 years. In 1987, I cofounded an international and a local organization that later became the International Association for Research on Relationships, the only society for the study of relationships. I have published 50 books on relationships, and this one is a sort of legacy volume. Not that any of that matters to you, but I was asked to put it in, and now we have got it out of the way.)

Let me guess that you see relationships as involving social or biological urges, emotions, feelings, self-disclosure, and intimacy; that you talk about people being “in” relationships; that by and large, you see people as having choices about their relationships; that a good relationship is based on “good communication.” If this is a more or less accurate guess, it is because it is what my students tell me. They have needs, attractions, physical impulses, or social desires for company, and they fulfill these needs through relationships that they *choose* to enter. They think that romance is good, that similarity of personality attracts (birds of a feather flock together), and that a kiss is either a greeting or a sign of passion. Like them, you probably don’t think that people should have sex on the bus, and you would be intrigued enough by the headline to read the

rest of the story about a 75-year-old woman marrying a 20-year-old man. You probably believe that your close relationships are more important to your life than are other sorts of distant relationships or general acquaintances. If you are like my students, then you probably believe that your relationships with friends and lovers are created freely, even if the original opportunity arose by chance from circumstances, events, or location; that you can get out of undesired relationships; and that all you need is love.

In this book, all of these assumptions are up for grabs. I want to present material in a way that makes you think either “Yes, I believe that. Is it right or not?” or “I never thought of that. I wonder if it is a good idea?”

Many people accept that a lot of relationship behavior—certainly, romantic behavior—is based on microbiology over which you have very little control—hormones, for example—and on the physical features like your sex and how you are built by genetics. You may feel strong sexual urges, your heart may race in the presence of someone you find attractive, your pupils may dilate (enlarge) when you feel attracted, you may perspire with excitement in a romantic event, and you may feel intense arousal and rage when spurned by a lover. Your body does this to you, willy-nilly. Much important relational research emphasizes the biological forces to which human beings are subject as part of this animal substrate to human nature. For example, you have physical urges, biological needs for sex, and tendencies to react physically and even physiologically to emotions of love or desire. Levels of cortisol or testosterone can even explain some of what goes on in family interaction (Floyd, 2004).

Humans share more than 98% of their DNA with chimpanzees, and you may have met some people who seem to share even more.

This is not surprising because we all know that human life, even relational life, has an animal, biological basis. But even though it is not surprising, is it a good idea?

Well, here are some of the problems with the idea: Chew over them and see what you think. Even if desire

has a physiological basis, it is nevertheless expressed, performed, and understood in a cultural and social context. Accordingly, you probably recognize the social and cultural boundaries that surround your physical enactment of these urges, such that even your animal lusts are expressed in socially or culturally approved ways. Your affections are expressed in a cultural and social environment that restrains or redirects your animal feelings. For example, even though the microbiology of Koreans, Canadians, and Fijians is essentially the same, they have a hugely divergent set of ways of enacting a marriage ceremony to legitimize the expression of the fundamental human urges for sex (Duck, 2007). This is not especially surprising, and we rarely consider it as a problem

or something worth thinking about. Culture/society and shared value systems about what is “right” in relationships not only direct relational behaviors, but are so much a part of life that they feel natural or, in other words, are completely taken for granted (TFG).

That is not all. The media, too, shape expressions of feelings and emphasize those cultural norms that are most expected and desired as “reasonable.” Social control of relational activities is pervasive and yet often invisible. Nevertheless, you do not kiss everyone you desire whenever you feel like it, because social rules forbid it; you do not marry a sibling because your society does not regard that as an acceptable form of marriage. The media and other people whom you meet in everyday life help you to see that there are good, bad, appropriate, inappropriate, and even forbidden ways to do love or friendship or even liking (adultery is bad, friendship is good).

The tensions between the biological ways to do relationships and the social constraints on such expression are often quite strong, and, by and large, it is very likely that you follow the social guidelines that exist in your own society. There are social forces that prevent pedophiles, for example, from making love to children, and also proscribe public sex or people demonstrating their deeply felt hatred of one another by stabbing them in public without consequences of law.

There is more, then, to relationships than the simple enactment of desires or choice. We must consider other factors than the ones you may have immediately thought to be relevant to desires for relationship, including the cultural context in which your

### Open Question to Ask Your Friends

Ask yourself and your friends which of these ideas seem to be obvious. (Note that some are contradictory, yet are also common sense.)

- Love is created by similarity (birds of a feather flock together)
- Opposites attract
- I could never date anyone I would not marry
- Love at first sight is not only possible but magical
- Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
- Distance lends enchantment to the view
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder
- Out of sight, out of mind
- True love is always founded on true friendship first
- It is quite reasonable to feel jealousy if your partner is flirting with someone else
- Someone who commits a crime in the heat of passion should be excused

beliefs about relationships are developed and enacted. All experiences of relationships are located in the more general set of cultural romantic beliefs and expectations.

This is both a reason why people see relationships as based on choice, emotion, similarity, and all the other items listed earlier, but also—more subtly—the reason why research keeps finding results consistent with those beliefs. Everyday folks think about relationships in the ways that are both taken for granted and reinforced by the culture in which people—and the scientific enterprises that seek to explain relationships—are based, and hence scientific research rests on the same assumptions. This is why, naturally enough—or so it seems to most people—the science tends to confirm and also conform with their (cultural) beliefs about the nature of relationships.

A key point I will highlight in this book is both obvious and overlooked. Language itself—the very way you talk about relationships and enforce the rules that surround them—is not a neutral medium, but affects discussion of relationships and also shapes them. If you talk about love, then it is judged to be good; try talking about incest, and you will find that society thinks that it is not a great idea. Your relational activity is done in talk with other people who share your relational assumptions because they are from the same society. That, in part, is what “culture” means: a *shared* set of assumptions that is freely bandied about and reinforced in your chatter with other people. You express love, liking, and desire, not only with hugs and kisses, but also through verbal discourse that your culture recognizes (“I love you”; “honey”; “darling”).

In order to understand relationships properly, we must understand the roles that society, language, those taken-for-granted assumptions, and other people who share those assumptions play in the conduct of relationships. In social context, your own personal ideas won’t mean much to anyone else unless the society at large “speaks the same language” about such relationships, because it is not (I will argue) all about you and your feelings for your partner; society steps into the picture as well. Everyone knows what you are talking about when you refer to adultery, friendship, Valentine’s Day, relationship success, relationship breakup, and the rest. You take for granted what other people know in a particular society.

Think about what is taken for granted when you read “Pope Breathing Without Assistance”—a headline from the BBC in March 2005. You have to know what a pope is, why you would expect him to need assistance to breathe, and why that would be important enough for a major news source to tell you about it. My neighbor is breathing without assistance right now, and there is no newspaper headline about it. In fact, a pope is a key figure in the world, and a lot of people cared about what was happening to this particular pope. In fact, he was dying, and the headline updated you on that state of affairs.

But see this in another light and you will recognize that relationships not only are conducted in a social context of shared beliefs, but occur in a society that *judges* the performance according to that set of beliefs and assumptions about what is allowed and what is prohibited or proscribed. You can therefore bring all these ideas a bit closer to home: The other people who influence you are not just distant members of society, but people you know personally and talk to in your everyday chitchat.

Our culture does not stress the role of parents in marriage partner choices, but in other cultures, they have the decisive voice. Members of those cultures believe as firmly as you do that their way is natural and right and reflects reality. Because you have been encouraged to think of abstractions like “society” and “culture” as precisely that—abstractions—you fail to recognize that these concepts work on the ground at the interpersonal level with one person talking to another. Therefore, you often fail to make explicit the ways in which your culture works through “secret agents”—all the people you know personally. Your talk with them subtly directs and sustains your beliefs about the ways in which relationships are supposed to happen.

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

The divorce rate in India, where many marriages are arranged, is around 1%. In the United States, where people express their own free choice, it is about 50%. Why do you think this is so?

Perhaps without recognizing it as such, you nevertheless feel the force of distant societal beliefs right at home, when you might, for instance, argue with your parents that you have individual rights to make your own choices. You might criticize or advise a friend about his or her relational behaviors, or you or the media feel free to disparage a celebrity for behaving inappropriately in a relationship—let’s say adopting a baby from Somalia, or being a president of a bank who breaks rules to do favors for his girlfriend. When these events happen, there is critical, judgmental society at work right in your face (if you are watching the media) or your ear (if you are talking with a friend). Your relationships, then, somewhat surprisingly, are not just yours but society’s.

## What Do Relationships Do for You?

If you are part of a society that has rules and boundaries about particular relationship types, does that mean that human beings have no *general* needs for relationships? Probably not the case. Work by sociologists suggests that there

are common requirements for relationships, but within such common needs, a society steers its members toward particular types of fulfillment. However, it is worth spending a short time exploring the broad value of relationships to people in general so that I can advance a more specific approach on top of that.

Given that I am explaining 21st-century relationships from a Western point of view, note that the very idea that humans get into relationships to fulfill personal (especially psychological) needs is a new idea. Seven hundred years ago, the needs of relationships would not involve psychological intimacy so much as the simple need to cooperate in order to stay alive. Modern Western culture has largely overcome the problems of sustaining life that may have driven the social needs of 700 years ago. In 1300 AD, people in the West bonded together to produce food, procreate, and prepare themselves for death. For the average person who actually made it to adulthood, death would arrive about the age of 32 years, and for most people alive in the middle of that century, it would take the devastating form of the Black Death that wiped out between 25% and 40% of the population of Europe (Gottfried, 1985). For such folk, relationships were not about a mushy sort of intimacy, full of flowers, sunsets, and self-disclosure, or even love. Everyone was striving to stay alive, reproduce, and save his or her soul, with little time or regard for the finer points of romance.

Nowadays, you expect a little more. People tend to presume that relationships are about fulfillment, love, companionship, and personal satisfaction and gratification. You have a choice, and you expect this because other, more basic needs for survival are taken care of. Upon what basis, then, are such choices made? Let's start to answer that by looking at general human needs, which can be brought down to the individual preferences that may be credited with influencing your relationship choices.

### **GENERAL REASONS FOR RELATING: THE SEVEN PROVISIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Alas, the idea of freedom of choice over relationships may be viewed with suspicion, given that researchers have routinely shown the ways in which choices are actually restricted by social and demographic forces (Kerckhoff, 1974). Demographers can easily demonstrate that there is a naggingly high relationship between the social class, religion, and racial background of people who marry each other, suggesting that the freedom of choice that we had imagined to exist may not be as great as assumed.

Sociologist and relational scholar Robert Weiss (1974) looked for some general features of human relating. From careful analysis of bunches of different reports, he identified seven "provisions" of relationships, starting with some that are based on physical-social needs and moving on to the deeply

psychological. Again, keep in mind that this approach is a strictly Western one and a psychological one, too, that takes little account of structural factors and culture, such as the historical needs that previously guided relational form.

The seven provisions are distilled from consideration of many different reports, stories about relationships, and even cultural stories (like fairy tales) that seem to show seven different, but equally important, benefits that make it attractive to be in relationships with other people. They summarize general human needs to be connected, as well as drawing on specific needs and desires that all humans have. Let's look at them one by one, then discuss the whole idea of whether (and how) such general needs would steer us to connect with other human beings.

### *1. Belonging and a Sense of Reliable Alliance*

This provision is, in essence, a desire for acceptance and inclusion by other people, but also a strong need to see them as “there” for you. Weiss (1974) saw this as a major—perhaps the major—human requirement and one that has lasted from earlier times in history.

Note the ways that advertisers play to this desire: “Membership has its privileges” is a familiar reminder of the fact that inclusion is agreeable and that exclusion is undesirable. Many different attempts to be included also imply that a person is *preferred*, largely through the explicit exclusion of others who do not qualify for preferred membership. The underlying idea is that a decent social life—indeed, a major human goal—depends on acceptance by others. By being accepted and included by other people, you are explicitly being approved for who you are and what you represent, what you believe, the ideas that you hold, and the qualities that you exemplify. You are granted status as an “acceptable” person. Other people recognize and accept your very essence, and in doing so, they ratify your personal order. Advertisers try to sell relationship or “membership of a community of owners” in order to get people to buy products. They also stress reliable alliance: They are on your side, you can trust them to be there for you when you need them; they want to be with you and they want to help you. (Even those annoying “on hold” messages that claim that “Your call is important to us” play up to this theme of belonging and reliable alliance.)

### *2. Emotional Integration and Stability*

This proposal is fundamental to human experience, and Weiss (1974) notes that a social world is virtually impossible without some benchmark against which a person can assess the appropriateness and validity of experiences and emotions. For example, displays of grief are culturally guided so that

other members of the society recognize the feelings that the person is expressing. So if you feel grief, then your performance of it is culturally influenced. (In some Middle Eastern cultures, grief is demonstrated by violent hurling of the body to the ground and rolling in the dust, whereas in Britain, grief is supposed to be dealt with in a restrained manner and a “stiff upper lip.”) Your emotional expression, in short, has to be accepted by others as meaningful and is not simply something that you feel inside alone. On top of your personal feelings, your expression of the emotion must be understandable to others and accepted by those others as a proper and *appropriate* way to express and feel.

For example, if the spouse of a murder victim does not show any emotion when told about the victim’s death, the police often treat that lack of emotion as suspicious. The media are forever reporting that someone showed no emotion when pronounced guilty by a jury, as if that person’s stillness confirms his or her guilt by its inappropriateness to the situation (as expected by the culture or society). You know how to express your emotional experiences in a form that other people can interpret correctly, but—here’s a key point—you *ask* other people. “This guy dumped me and I feel really bad. What should I do about it?” “My neighbor said this to me. Should I have been offended?” “Should I feel this bad about my job? Is it a normal way to feel?” Teenagers tend to do this quite a bit when it comes to dealing with romantic relationships and how they should be handled (Baxter, Dun, & Sahlstein, 2001). They refer their experiences to other teenagers for comment and advice. They learn by comparing their experiences with their friends’ experiences and finding out how other people deal with life.

In short, your daily relationships provide a stable and meaningful way of seeing the world “out there,” and this way of seeing is relational and based on communication rather than just being an individual experience. Even if you feel the emotion *personally*, all the same, the way in which you express it is shaped by the culture or the society to which you belong. Again, then, your personal feelings are expressed within a set of social expectations, and this helps you to feel integrated and stable.

### *3. Opportunities for Communication About Ourselves*

Weiss (1974) represented this as a fundamental provision of relationships, and indeed, there are many examples of cases in which people deprived of opportunities for communication about self readily unload themselves upon the nearest available victim, whether this be representatives of shower-curtain ring companies on planes or the traditional “strangers on the train” who talk your ear off about their own lives. Basically, we all like to talk about ourselves, and lots of “conversation” is basically people talking just about themselves to someone else (“Yes, that’s interesting that it happened to you, because it happened to me too. I . . . [goes on for 20 minutes]”).

This need for communication about ourselves is fundamental and depends entirely on one's acceptance of the idea that social interaction itself pre-requires the listening presence of others who will share, accept, or at least listen politely to one's view of the world. So it means again that you are aware of the need to shape your personal reports into a form that other people can at least tolerate, but preferably accept. The new point that I'm making here is quite a simple one. Communication about yourself in everyday life also serves to assist you in satisfying your other needs, such as membership or acceptance of your personal reports. Although you have a need to communicate, then, that need is based on a deeper basic need, a pack mentality: a need for the acceptance of your way of looking at the world and inclusion in a group of other people who find it acceptable.

#### *4. Provision of Assistance and Physical Support*

Another obvious benefit that friends provide for one another is to help each other physically, although this is not evident in all relationships and can be done differently in different sorts of relationships (for example, relationships with one's elderly parents may require more demonstration of physical support than one's relationships with same-age peers). However, a general likelihood of being called upon to help friends, relations, and lovers is presumed when you enter such relationships.

Physical assistance is often provided by others for tasks that require more than one actor (like moving furniture too heavy for one person), and it is well-known that friends or relations can be called upon for physical help when other people would not be asked to do so (e.g., looking after cats, rats, and other pets during a person's absence; collecting the mail; driving one to the mall; and so forth).

But take a deeper look. Help giving, rather like the sending and receiving of birthday cards, is really about the honoring of the relationship and not about the monetary or physical value of the help or the gift—a story I will cover in much more depth in a later chapter. In short, *help is symbolic*. In other words, if you value the opinions of other people, then you accept the symbolic actions by which they indicate your value to them. As a matter of fact, this happens in the development of friendship, too: As you get to know and like someone more, you are opened to his or her influence in offering you new insights and attitudes about the world. You expect that he or she will help you and you will help him or her, even when it is inconvenient to do so. It is all part of the connecting bond that there is also a restricting bind (Wiseman, 1986). Think about the symbolism that is involved in doing favors for people. When you do something for someone else, it shows how much you value him or her as a person. You acknowledge the person's effort to be nice, even if you don't like the

gift itself, because “it’s the thought that counts.” This is such a significant topic that I will devote a chapter to it later in the book.

### 5. *Reassurance of Your Worth and Value*

Weiss (1974) separated this provision from others, but it seems to me to be a version of the fundamental driver of interpersonal communication, namely, the need for emotional integration and stability (confirmation of your personal perspective), of which the reassurance of one’s worth is merely one example. In other words, if you need to be accepted, then other people’s opinions about your worth are counted as valuable. However, for most people in Western society, it is also important to be recognized as an individual, and this recognition is about more than emotional integration (Provision 2). It is important recognition of a person as an individual who has rights and privileges. The importance of being seen as an autonomous individual with freedom of choice about many issues is a fundamental element of the social order of modern Western society.

The other side of choice—being chosen by other people—also helps to reinforce your value as people. Accordingly, it is important to people to *demonstrate* that you have friendships, and indeed, Facebook explicitly allows people to show and tell how many friends they have (with pictures!). Similarly, award plaques and birthday cards are not hidden away in drawers (because *you* know you got them) but instead are openly displayed so that *others* can see that you received them.

Advertisers also like to show the users of their products as popular and valued people. Just look at all those photos of happy groups of people laughing with one another and hence showing closeness, membership, and acceptance of one another as they use the product. This, too, plays into the human need to be made to feel good.

The importance of Weiss’s observation is that this happens through acceptance of you as a person—or in my terms, acceptance as a person who has a reasonable, socially acceptable, personal perspective. Because personal perspectives are personal, it is important that in a competitive world with different sets of personal perspectives available, your own personal version is evaluated and judged as acceptable by others. Obviously, this connects to the idea that people are motivated to be in relationships because of their similarity to one another, an idea that we will revisit in several different ways in the rest of the book.

### 6. *Opportunity to Help Others*

Most people enjoy the chance to show that they are decent, honorable people who are valuable to others. If someone else falls over in the street, many would just keep on walking, but you would probably feel a lot better about

yourself if you were to stop and help. Then you would feel good about yourself for acting as a decent human being. This provision of relationships is about acceptance of a worldview in which you play a leading role. By helping others, a person not only establishes his or her own worth to others but also shows, on the basis of this implicit dependency of others, a further indication of the value of self in relation to other people (“I’m a Good Samaritan”).

### *7. Personality Support*

You probably choose to hang out with people who think and value the same things you think and value. It is unsettling to hang out with people who always disagree with everything you say. Note that today you have more options about choices of who to hang out with than people may have had in the past, when a village was small and you knew everyone there personally, like it or not, and couldn’t just get in your car and drive off somewhere else. The luxury of seeking intimate personality support is quite likely a recent development that stems from greater freedom and choice. Intimacy now has something to do with sharing secrets and facts about one’s inner self that may not have been true a long time ago, and so this way of thinking about intimacy itself, in the broader historical context, a relatively recent one.

All of these provisions of relationships seem to represent general human needs, yet they are specific to a historical time, as I noted at the start of this section. They seem quite natural to us these days because our culture places a lot of stress on individual choices and rights to satisfy individual needs. Therefore, because you are a member who subscribes to that social viewpoint, the above list seems natural and perhaps even obvious—but open your questioning mind.

The way culture recognizes relationships seems to be natural not only to you as an individual in your own world but also to those researchers from your own culture. They create that reality to you in their scientific enterprises drawn from a Western culture that emphasizes choice, science, and biology. Research on relationships tends to support cultural views, often without acknowledging the fact that the research is carried out in a particular culture that has sets of beliefs that might influence the results. Research participants who are asked to report about their relationships naturally enough do so within the framework of beliefs that they hold to be normal and natural, just as you would do. Likewise, researchers rarely challenge this underlying set of frameworks because it is a set to which they themselves subscribe and in which they are naturally engulfed.

I will occasionally refer to this set of assumptions as *The Old Way*: Relationships are important; they are based on feelings, choice, enjoyment, and intimacy; and they may even be the result of some hardwired human biological or physiological drives and yet are contained within some sense of public decency and norms of behavior. This way of thinking about relationships probably feels so natural that it doesn’t appear to reflect any biases, but merely indicates the way the

world actually is. Indeed, you will see that much research takes this view and sees its job as simply uncovering the kinds of attitudes and personality styles that help people to make their choices of partners, render people attractive to others, and predict relationship success (usually measured in terms of relational length and the partners' satisfaction levels). All the same, there are biological, social, and cultural influences on the ways in which relationships happen. The Old Way, just described, is actually reinforced by such relational enterprises as speed dating, online dating, and the people around you. People accept as natural the idea that similarity underlies attraction, acquaintance, and relational success.

## **A Brisk Look at Research and Assumptions**

Given that, let's take a brisk look at research on relationships—simply a high-level map at this stage, a sketch only—and then go on to indicate what is different about my angle on it all. I will base my approach on talk and the fact that we are materially embodied beings—that is, people with a physical shape and structure that may be judged by others. This book takes a close look at the subtleties that underlie elements of real life, and I will challenge common beliefs about relationships that you may presently take for granted as I explore these implications.

I will be swimming against the tide of the sea of research in relationships, and so at this point, it makes sense to give a brief summary of what this research says and then go on to indicate new ways of understanding such research and beliefs. As you read the rest of this book, you should keep remembering the way in which research tends to reinforce the values of the society that generates it, something to which I will return many times. As you go along, remember just how much research plays into this Western narrative, studying freedom of choice, love and romance, and showing a mild surprise when it turns out that social class, religion, and education levels actually predict marriage patterns pretty well (Kerckhoff, 1974). In short, all that freedom of choice actually steers people into very predictable groupings anyway.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTION**

Should marriages be arranged by parents? Should they be approved by parents? How much freedom of choice do you think you had in your romantic choices? How different are you and your partner in terms of race, religion, socioeconomic standing, education, locale of origin—and what is the longest distance you had ever lived apart before meeting?

## RESEARCH ON RELATIONSHIPS: A SKETCH MAP

My main purpose in this chapter at this point of the book is only to point out some key features represented in the huge amount of research on relationships and against that to sketch an alternative and unique way of understanding relationships. Therefore, rather than summarizing this research, except in the broadest possible way, here I intend to introduce it only; then, as we go along, I will expand on it as I put it into the new framework that I offer. However, this research will largely confirm the ways of thinking about relationships I outlined just now as *The Old Way*. That is, it assumes that relationships are about emotions and positive attitudes toward other people, are based on choice, and very often happen in stages of development, from initial attraction to deep and long-lasting personal attachments. When you feel close to somebody, it is because you like them, and you like them because *they are like you*.

A brief and encapsulated review of all this research on human relationships would go something like what follows (and a fuller review can be found in Duck, 2007). Since the study of attraction first became marked by the publication of a book on interpersonal attraction by Berscheid and Walster (1969), there has been at first a steady, and then a sudden, growth in research on interpersonal attraction and relationships. Attraction was regarded in these books as an attitude (Berscheid & Walster, 1969)—not a physical response; not a calculated, rational decision; not the response of loins; not anything performed (enacted, carried out, done) in the real world, but an attitude—a mental, internal, psychological state. According to this approach, I could be attracted to you as one brain or adding machine may be attracted to another. Not very exciting, and not at all connected to the real world of experience outside of the experimental laboratory.

In the early days, those who studied attraction were divided between those attending to initial attraction (Berscheid & Walster, 1969) and those who saw attraction as a longer term process (e.g., Levinger, 1974). Reviews of the research in any decade since the 1960s in psychology alone ran to several dozen pages, and yet there are now at least four handbooks about real relationships (Duck, Dindia, Ickes, Milardo, Mills, & Sarason, 1997; Duck, Hay, Hobfoll, Ickes, & Montgomery, 1988; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2000; Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006). There are also two major flourishing multidisciplinary journals about relationships that specifically publish almost monthly volumes of several hundred pages per year on the new and exciting research being done on real-world relationships more broadly (*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and *Personal Relationships*), and a number of other journals in specific disciplines such as psychology, communication, sociology, and family studies that also publish research on relationships.

While acknowledging the impossibility of a full review here, I can identify a number of important points:

1. Most research on relationships focuses on *voluntary relationships*, and generalizations about them are made from that basis without recognizing some of the limits of doing so (for example, that you tend to have relationships with people from the same socioeconomic status, religious background, race, neighborhood, and so forth). The fact is that, given a choice, the influences on those choices may be different from those that, absent choice, affect relationships (for example, think about the ease of sustaining relationships with people whom you meet frequently, as opposed to those you meet only rarely).
2. Most research on relationships is done with *young subjects*, usually of college age, because they are really easy to persuade to do experiments for course instructors, even though this represents a segment of about 5% of the life span, and in demographic terms is clearly educationally, economically, and racially biased.

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

What, if anything, is wrong with using college-age students in research about romantic relationships?

3. The research tends to emphasize the *freedom, advantages, and positive aspects of relationships* to the neglect of the dark side (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994). More important, the research tends to split life into light and dark rather than explaining the ways in which people manage the two together (Wood & Duck, 1995). Yet in everyday life, you are constantly confronted with the fact that you cannot actually do whatever you want. In fact, you are constantly influenced by the opinions of other people, or media that both promote certain sorts of relationships (for example, marriage) and criticize others (for example, adultery and pedophilia). Life is not a glossy set of simple black-and-white attitudes or straightforward choices but a largely complex and confusing array of dilemmas. When people tell stories about their relationships, they often dress up events as simpler, more linear, and perhaps even more logical than the way in which they are actually experienced. and so too, perhaps, do the researchers. At any rate, the nature of storytelling and narrative will become an important part of the way in which I unfold my view of relationships.

## SOME MAJOR THREADS OF RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Likewise, one can summarize and simplify the main threads of this research. Of course, it is only a sketch, and fuller details can be found in the cited sources.

First, a major element involves the study of *initial attraction between strangers*, mostly between people of college age. It is based largely on the assumption that similarity of attitudes (Byrne, 1997) causes conditioned responses or that similarity of personality characteristics (Levinger, 1974) or that ingrained personality dynamics make people physically or psychologically attracted to some specific people as distinct from different other people.

Second, a major aspect of relationship research is based on *attachment styles*, which are the attitudes toward relationships that are formed in infancy in connection with caretakers of the infant (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Huge amounts of research have been done since 1987 that demonstrate that a person's attachment style—his or her way of relating learned in infancy—tends to predispose the person toward certain kinds of relationships later in life. Those people who feel secure in relationships develop longer and more satisfying relationships than those who are anxious or avoidant of other people. We will consider and reinterpret this line of research in Chapter 3.

A third style of research pays attention to the *communication influences* on the way in which relationships are conducted. For example, relationships are based on disclosure of intimate information to other people as you become closer and more intimate with them (Petronio, 2002). Other research focuses on individuals' management of the difficulties and tensions of relationships that arise in their communication with other individuals (Baxter, 2010). This research looks at the ways in which you conduct relationships in the face of competing demands on your time or dilemmas between your desire for autonomy and your need for connection, for example. Should you spend time with a lover at the expense of time with friends? What about your desires to be an autonomous, free, and independent individual, as compared to your desires to be connected with someone else—a fact that necessarily constrains your independence? You are prepared to enter relationships knowing that you must give up some independence in order to spend time with others who want to share your time and attention.

What about the fact that you want to be open and honest in relationships and yet retain some control over the privacy of your own life, thoughts, feelings, and personality? What are the boundaries of privacy when close relationships demand that you reveal information to intimates that may not be made available to just anybody? This line of research explores such factors as the disclosure of personal information in a variety of circumstances; the tendency to feel more comfortable and to be more intimate with those about whom one knows more

in detail and depth; and the fact that in everyday conversation, individuals balance their needs for privacy with their desire for intimacy (Baxter, 2010; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Petronio, 2002).

As relationships develop, individuals disclose more about their personal inner experience, and yet they do so in ways that require careful management such that neither too much nor too little is revealed. Individuals desire personal autonomy but are willing to give up some of this autonomy in order to become connected with other individuals. For example, I may wish to be an independent human being with my own personal secrets and concerns, but I recognize that in order to become intimate with somebody else, I must be willing to disclose and share, honestly and openly, certain aspects of myself that are not made available to everyone at large.

A fourth and equally important area of research in personal relationships demonstrates the strategies that people use in order to *maintain relationships* that have reached a particular level of intimacy (“relational maintenance”) (Canary & Stafford, 1994). Indeed, it is expected that you continually practice certain sorts of disclosure and some ritual forms of attachment as part of the nature of belonging to such a relationship. These may be routine meetings or offers of tokens of commitment and love, such as gifts, cards, or favors for friends that may be burdensome—for example, giving up time to drive friends to the airport—that demand the relinquishment of your personal time in order to keep the relationship going.

Fifth, there is broad awareness that the *social networks* within which people operate as a dyad or pair or couple have a large influence on the way in which their relationship is experienced. Partners are often introduced to one another in the first place through third parties or are influenced by their social networks in decisions about the nature of relationships and what counts as satisfactory performance there (Parks, 2006). People are sensitive to the norms of society that dictate how relationships are “done” or must be managed, particularly when under strain. Much research is now done on the influence on personal relationships exercised by the family as a whole (Floyd, 2004) and on the dark side of relationships, which involves conflict, difficulty, and stress (Kirkpatrick, Duck, & Foley, 2006; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998). After all, relationships are not easy and often require work. You take that for granted because society tells you it is true and important that you must be prepared to work on relationships. Initial choice (all that naïve early work on “attraction”) now turns out in real life to require the hard work of dedication, exclusivity, and commitment rather than just having an attitude about someone.

Sixth, research has focused on the *narratives* that people tell about relationships: You do not just have them, you perform and talk about them. For one thing, you talk to your partners about how you feel and they may like what you say. Families also have stories about what is important to them

(Huisman, 2008; Koenig Kellas, 2007). In telling the stories, relating to others, performing socially accepted rituals of relationships, and maintaining both your relationships and your personal freedom, you are not simply expressing personal choice or reacting to your own internal emotions. You are molding your behavior and your relationships to forms imposed by a society outside of yourself. See how free choice may not be so free after all?

## **A Different Approach**

Relationships are talked into being (Chapter 7) and are about knowledge as we experience it in a material world. So let me start to contrast the previous hasty sketch with my own approach in this book by drawing attention to the glaringly obvious fact that when you relate to other people, you usually do so through everyday communication. Any underlying basis of emotional attachment is essentially expressed through the sending of messages that indicate emotion in everyday talk. This book emphasizes and reevaluates this important fact. I will be trying to demonstrate that many of the elements that you regard as central to relating are actually based on the fact that your communication with other people does more than simply declare or express the inner worlds of your psychological essence, or bring about results of your own thoughtful choices and actions. Life is more complicated and messy.

Relationships are based specifically on *transacted communication*, a form of communication that creates more than it appears to do on its face. For example, a handshake can *transact* a contract; saying the words “I do” can *transact* a wedding; and the response of your partner to a text can *transact* love and trust between you, even if the message itself just says “OK, see you tonight.”

The way you talk or think about something—whether relationships or anything else—is tightly bound up in the larger worldview that you adopt as a member of a particular culture, and “does” or transacts that membership for you by connecting you to others’ TFG assumptions. A relationship is not simply the waving in other people’s faces of your attitudes, beliefs, or personality, to which they respond with either positive or negative affection. Indeed, the very way you now talk and think about relationships is connected tightly to your larger belief system about the nature of relationships. Therefore, I am going to introduce two unfamiliar ideas: *the presentational nature of communication* and *rhetorical vision*.

## **THE PRESENTATIONAL VIEW OF COMMUNICATION**

Most people see communication as *representational*: that is, it reports facts, describes objects, declares states of affairs, discloses one’s heart, and represents

the outside world or your inner personal feelings in a more or less accurate, if personally selective, way. On the other hand, many researchers in communication studies recognize that communication is always *presentational* (i.e., it is a spin on the facts) or *performative*, an act, in a theatrical sense, that does the drama of relating.

I am not saying that people *can* spin the facts, I'm saying that all relating is about spin and performance—about doing relationships rather than just having them, and presenting something rhetorical. It is all that you do. Even choice of what to reveal about yourself to someone is strategic and therefore “spin” to suit the circumstances. Communication is always spin; always persuasive; always an attempt to persuade; always rhetorical, argumentative, and position-oriented. Carl and Duck (2004) conceived of talk and relationships as inherently connected to interpersonal influence, tying together the rhetorical and interpersonal aspects of relating. They claim that “talk is inherently rhetorical in that it implicitly offers a persuasive account of a view and hence is an effort to attempt to persuade others to support said view of the world or of self” (p. 7).

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

Have you ever presented a relationship as if it were fair when you kind of knew that it wasn't?

### RHETORICAL VISION

Every time you speak or act, you present your perspective, your own personal view, your “take” on events, which in large part will be positioned within the framework that your culture accepts as the normal and taken-for-granted way in which relationships should be done. As such, talk always presents the speaker's *rhetorical vision*: A rhetorical vision is a depiction of values, preferences, and opinions, whether explicit or implicit. In the explicit case, rhetorical visions are presented whenever you take a position in an open discussion, debate, dispute, or battle of ideas over a contentious issue.

In the implicit cases, which are much more frequent, a person's values, judgments, preferences, and opinions are bound up in the topics chosen or avoided in everyday conversation, the ideas or other people held up to criticism, the endorsement or approval of ideas and statements. Even the choice to wear a Cubs T-shirt is an expression of a rhetorical vision—that sports matter, that people can legitimately express preferences for teams. Every phrase that you utter has some set of values, assumptions, and preferences (and therefore,

by definition, some rejection and disapproval of other values, etc.) built into it.

### *The Language of Relationships*

All through life, you go around offering these rhetorical visions to people, and the visions are central to the understanding of relationships. In fact, you cannot think of relationships without buying into a rhetorical vision (usually one endorsed by your culture) about them. That is why it is important to begin by inspecting and assessing the kinds of hidden assumptions that lay beneath the open beliefs that you now make about the way in which relationships work. For example, it is a rhetorical vision that friendship is good and desirable (which is why Twitter is so popular) and that isolation, loneliness, or unwillingness to enter relationships is a bad thing.

Sometimes, you may be aware of the existence in your culture of these social beliefs about relationships that affect what you do. The norms and social constraints within a rhetorical vision may be more apparent when you realize that you care what the neighbors think about the way you conduct your relationships, and that a lot of relationships happen in a set of social structures that influences relational performance. For example, you have colleagues at work (a social and organizational structure), and the organization may have fierce rules about the relationships you may and may not have with coworkers. These may range from rules that you cannot spend all day chatting cheerfully with pals at work instead of spending time serving customers, right through to a ban on sexual relationships between a boss and employees.

Some of these rules in your closest relationships are also almost inescapable. As every teenager has at one time observed, you cannot choose your parents, and in fact, the same basic point is true for neighbors, classmates, coworkers, and the people on your holiday tour bus. You are stuck with them, and have to have relationships with them whether you want to or not. In fact, you don't see it as a restriction on you yet, but you do probably have a vision of relationships as containers in which you are held ("*in a relationship*") or states that you have entered ("*in love*") or stable elements of your life and circumstances ("I *am* friends with . . .," "I *am* married to . . .").

### **Listen in on Your Own Life**

Look around you. In what ways are your associates depicting and presenting their rhetorical visions? Consider T-shirts, clothing styles, and dress as part of someone's rhetorical vision, but don't stop there. What is conveyed about their rhetorical vision by hairstyle, jewelry, body posture, way of walking, use (or not) of makeup, tone of voice, size of car, place of living, ownership of pets, ways of spending Friday night, and so on? Keep on making the list, and then ask, "What is the message?"

*Materiality and Relationships*

Other long-term constraints on your relationships are provided by your biological age and your sex, the definition and the limits or expectations imposed on you by your social gender (“he-man,” “femininity”), or your sexual orientation. All of this affects the way in which other people treat you and you treat them. Also, in their own ways, they limit, focus, or restrict the range of relational possibilities. All three of them—the biological, the social, and the orientational influences—affect your expectations and beliefs about relationships and the ways in which other people make relational demands or grant relational benefits to you. It is possible, for example, that other people will comment on whether you are behaving appropriately in relationships, as compared to the expectations surrounding your sex (“Guys can’t say that to guys”) (Burluson, Holmstrom, & Gilstrap, 2005).

So where did choice in relationships (that was part of your original rhetorical vision of relationships) go, before you ever realized that it is a rhetorical vision to think of relationships as being based on choice? Does it matter that a lot of your relational time is actually spent with people you did not choose, and that you are necessarily, even if sometimes unwittingly, acting within the constraints imposed by social expectations about your culture, your race, your gender, or your sexual orientation? Yes, all this matters if you assume, as I do, that relationships, whether chosen or enforced, are actually formative—that is, they do something to contribute to your identity and make you who you are.

Now, you probably believe right now that your identity is prior to relationships (by which I mean that you, as the person you already are, go into relationships rather than relationships being processes that make you the person you are). Of course, you can see that relationships are so important to you that in some ways, you would be a different person without your loved ones, but you don’t see them as making you who you are, especially the ones that you do not choose or react against. People like to believe these don’t influence or shape identity, but you might change your mind about that as we go along.

## **Do Relationships Make You Who You Are?**

This book invites you to reflect on and perhaps rethink some of your assumptions and beliefs about relationships. An easy place to start to drive the wedge is with the earlier assumptions about the permanence of relationships as states (“I *am* friends with . . .”). You have probably ended friendships, lost lovers, had rough patches with the family, and argued with coworkers in ways

that actually point to another way of seeing relationships, one based on *instability* and *uncertainty*. This will lead me to characterize relationships as always *incomplete* and never really ending—unfinished business. You can still be seriously affected by previous relationships even after it seems that they have ended: They can affect your sense of self even though they do not continue. They are ongoing, they are unfinished business, they always have surprises in store (Duck, 1990), and you can still be upset by a whiff of the fragrance that reminds you of a past love.

Relationships are *not* containers you are in or belong to, or states you have entered, or stable elements of life in any simple way. On the contrary, the sense of stability is one that you impose through a rhetorical vision that promotes the idea of stability: It helps you to make sense out of continuity, change, and chaos. It therefore serves as a mechanism to help you deal with change not only in relationships, but also in your sense of self and way of life. So the choices in relationships are, in fact, choices about the way in which you “spin” your talk about relationships, and perhaps are not the same as freedom of choice.

All the same, your sense of self and relationships can be influenced by the actions and behaviors of other people—which points again to the idea that relationships are formative, and that your identity may not be prior to relationships.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND SENSE OF SELF

Consider a scene in the movie *Love Actually* in which Emma Thompson’s character confronts her husband (played by Alan Rickman) about her suspicions that he is having an affair. He admits to being “a classic fool,” and she responds that he has not made just a fool of himself but also a fool of her and, more important, of *her whole way of life*. In other words, his relational actions reflect not only on their relationship as a married couple, but on her way of being in the world and her sense of identity as a loyal wife and mother.

Another, even more compelling example is provided by this note written by a recently widowed woman.

There is the question of identity, or self, or “Who the hell am I now?” I know that my life is a bigger set than the part of it I spent with Pete, but quite frankly, I didn’t like my life much before then and felt myself to be floundering before I met him. Now I am fearful of being pulled out to sea by the rip-tide, to take a metaphor too far. I think one of my (far too many) challenges right now is to claim or keep what I received from him (safety, love, respect, positive regard, trust, a sense of myself as a capable and strong and worthy woman). He provided such a foundation for me that I could go out into the world without fear, as long as I knew I could come back home to him and be

understood, cared about, listened to, and encouraged. It is that foundation that is missing, and I have no idea how to create it for myself. And now, once again, I am fearful about being in the world. I know that part of this journey of grief is to create a new life, a new identity, a new sense of self. I would just rather have the old one back.

These examples outline the main claim of this book that relationships are part of how you understand the world: Relationships are ways of knowing, and they influence the ways you know the world, what you know, and how you know it. Ways of being with a specific person activate a part of self that no one else activates in the same way. The character making a fool of another person in a role (as wife) makes a fool of her choices, her way of life, her whole way of being.

More than this, a person's whole sense of self comes from a primary relationship. The widow saw a primary sense of herself coming from her previous relationship with her husband, and how he knew her and helped her to understand the world. She felt able to cope with the world because he was there, but what he provided was beyond a sense of just coping—it was a way of seeing herself and a way of being. She wonders, “What will I do now that he is not here? How can I be the person he made me when he is not here anymore as a guide?” She wants to know what or who will give her that sense of knowing and what or who will offer her a way of being.

She is aware that others help you to cope with the world. She means that other people—especially close, loved other people—provide a sense of how to deal with the world, how to understand its ways of working, how to minimize the threats that she feels it has in store for her. She is expressing the same view as Weiss (1974), but in a different way: Emotional integration can mean that if you don't know how to cope, then others will help tell you how to relate to the world. They will provide both the physical and the emotional means to give you a grasp on the world, a world that would otherwise be chaos.

This even works for negative relationships as long as we start to see them as more than “attitudes” and instead as unfolding behavior, performance, everyday life, and transactional communication between living people who are themselves relatively likely to change over time. Most people live their lives in the everyday world that is quite dissimilar from the environment in which subjects in psychological experiments are asked to report what they believe about imagined scenarios.

## **SENSE OF SELF AND RELATIONAL ABUSE**

Pam Secklin is a researcher on relationships who had a personal experience relevant to the above idea that relationships reinforce the view of self.

Secklin (2001) reports on her experience in an abusive relationship that became so much a part of the very way she saw herself, so inextricably tied up with her sense of worthlessness in the eyes of someone who, at the time, mattered to her, that at first she tried to make it work by pleasing him. She played a submissive role up to a point where a particular event (her husband's giving away her pet dog without her permission) forced her to recognize that she was being not supported, but annihilated. That event and her final meeting with her dog, now owned by someone else, gave her the courage to end the abusive relationship and so reassert her identity as the person *she* wanted to be rather than the one *he* wanted her to be. This report is particularly important not just because it emphasizes how a person can be manhandled to become a different person from the one she wants to be, but also because in this case, the person was a relationship researcher who knew how to write a research report on the problem and how to change things.

At this point, all of these considerations should be making you think much more carefully about whether relationships are about simple choices, basic emotion, and taken-for-granted. They have a complex connection to your sense of self and the way in which it is presented through talk. Creeping into the material I have presented so far is not only the idea that society, other people, and even close relatives can shape the way in which we experience ourselves, but also the idea that the *presentation* of self through talk is a big part of relating.

Relationships are more than emotional attachments; they tell you, guide you, and show you how to understand and deal with what is going on. The widow does not believe that she can create it for herself, that she can be herself without the specific help of someone else. Secklin (2001) had to experience a deeply hurtful personal trauma concerning a pet in order to realize how her self, her view of the world, her rhetorical vision was being essentially negated in the relationship as it previously existed. In both cases, each woman felt that she could not be herself without specific other people to activate the parts that make her feel whole. In Secklin's case, it took a key catalytic event to say "Enough!" and allow her to accept that the other person was abusive and that she needed to get out of the relationship, not just out of an emotional bond, but out of a way of seeing and knowing herself.

## **A Preview of the Book**

All the above sets up a contrast between The Old Way and some new ideas for looking at relationships. I will be introducing traditional research and theory about relationships from the point of view of interpersonal communication, psychology, family studies, and sociology, which have all contributed

to the understanding of relationships. I will also be encouraging you to reflect on your own personal experiences of relationships not only from this research perspective, but also in your own daily experience of the world as it leads you to think about relationships. This includes not only your relational experiences in daily life, but also the ways in which other experiences in the world influence relationships in particular cultural frameworks for understanding.

These influences can be songs you hear or what other people say to you about relationships, the way relationships are reported in the news or on TV shows, the effects of friends and neighbors discussing what you do, and what is acceptable relational behavior. You can even count the fact that greeting card companies offer us ways to celebrate the nature of relationships from Mother's Day to birthday to anniversary cards (for romance, but not for friendship) and that Facebook and Twitter essentially advertise the importance of huge numbers of "friends" as a measure of your own worth in society. They are ways in which other people and "society at large" influence what you believe about relationships and the effects of being in a society that instructs you about the sorts of relationships that are acceptable and those that are forbidden.

The book also shows how relationships are the synapses between self and society, miniature forms of connection of the human solo subject with an abstraction such as "society." The first purpose of the book is to rethink the role of relationships and how they work. A second purpose is to show the centrality of relationships in our very experience of the world as forces for influencing our thoughts.

I will start the contrast by focusing on the role of communication in relationships, particularly the way in which it helps to order our world and create meaning. Communication is an often-reported source of success or failure in relationships, but equally, the term is used by people at large and in some research paradigms with different meanings. Research and ideas about communication can actually be at odds when researchers mistakenly believe that use of the same term means that they are talking about the same thing. I will introduce the notion of the *epistemic*—the way in which we know and are aware of experiences in the world—and relationships as persuasion (*rhetoric*), because it is clearly the case that we will do favors for friends that we would not do for other people. Therefore, I will spend some time proposing that relationships are inherently persuasive backgrounds.

In Chapter 3, I will reconsider the nature of personality and reframe it away from a set of values or beliefs and into a set of experiences and reactions by other people, starting in childhood, which themselves influence our likelihood of relating to others in ways based on our sense of knowing who we are.

Chapter 4 will focus on the bodily materiality of relating and the way in which our selves are material, embodied, and physical. This will lead to consideration of the way in which our material selves influence our relationships. As part of this consideration, I will look at the way in which we tend to see ourselves as objects in the eyes of others.

Chapter 5 will reconsider the nature of sex and society, and in particular, the relationship between sexual activity and our knowledge of the world. It will present three different series of sexual epistemics that, in themselves, either conform with or are morally rejected by society as a whole. Other aspects of our material world are considered in Chapter 6, whether these are material historical forces with which we contend in our particular circumstances of life or the material gifts that are used to serve symbolic functions in creating knowledge about and commitment to or rejection of relationships. In Chapter 7, I will consider the ways in which relationships are talked into being by the nature of conversation, context, the rhetorical situation, and our abilities to interpret one another's worlds of meaning. Chapter 8 will show why this rethinking matters.

## PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES

### ETHICAL ISSUES

Is it ever right to date two people at the same time?

Is relational jealousy ever justified?

Why should/should not romantic relationships be based on the notion of exclusivity?

### MEDIA ISSUES

Find three different sources in the media that represent relationships in different ways.

Check a recent issue of *Cosmopolitan*, count the number of articles that concern relationships, and fill out at least one questionnaire that compares whether you are doing things “correctly” or as successfully as other people. Make sure that the questionnaire gives you a score that interprets your skill in relationships at some level. Keep the results and the magazine for later.

## References

- Baxter, L. A. (2010). *Voicing relationships: A dialogic perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). Relational dialectics theory: Crafting meaning from competing discourses. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication* (pp. 349–361). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Baxter, L. A., Dun, T. D., & Sahlstein, E. M. (2001). Rules for relating communicated among social network members. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18*, 173–200.
- Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogs and dialectics*. New York: Guilford.
- Berscheid, E., & Walster, H. E. (1969). *Interpersonal attraction*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Burleson, B. R., Holmstrom, A. J., & Gilstrap, C. (2005). “Guys can’t say that to guys”: Four experiments assessing the normative motivation account for deficiencies in the emotional support provided by men. *Communication Monographs, 72*(4), 468–501.
- Byrne, D. (1997). An overview (and underview) of research and theory within the attraction paradigm. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 14*, 417–431.
- Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (Eds.). (1994). *Communication and relationship maintenance*. New York: Academic Press.
- Carl, W. J., & Duck, S. W. (2004). How to do things with relationships. In P. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 28* (pp. 1–35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cupach, W. R., & Spitzberg, B. H. (Eds.). (1994). *The dark side of interpersonal communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Duck, S. W. (1990). Relationships as unfinished business: Out of the frying pan and into the 1990s. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*, 5–29.
- Duck, S. W. (2007). *Human relationships* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Duck, S. W., Dindia, K., Ickes, W., Milardo, R. M., Mills, R. S. L., & Sarason, B. (Eds.). (1997). *Handbook of personal relationships* (2nd ed.). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Duck, S. W., Hay, D. F., Hobfoll, S. E., Ickes, W., & Montgomery, B. (Eds.). (1988). *Handbook of personal relationships*. Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Floyd, K. (2004). Introduction to the uses and potential uses of physiological measurement in the study of family communication. *Journal of Family Communication, 4*(3,4), 295–317.
- Gottfried, R. S. (1985). *The Black Death: Natural and human disaster in medieval Europe*. Boston: Free Press.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 511–524.
- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Close relationships: A sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Huisman, D. (2008). *Intergenerational family storytelling*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Kerckhoff, A. C. (1974). The social context of interpersonal attraction. In T. L. Huston (Ed.), *Foundations of interpersonal attraction* (pp. 61–77). New York: Academic Press.

- Kirkpatrick, C. D., Duck, S. W., & Foley, M. K. (Eds.). (2006). *Relating difficulty: The processes of constructing and managing difficult interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Koenig Kellas, J. (2007). Narrative theories: Making sense of interpersonal communication. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication* (pp. 241–254). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Levinger, G. (1974). A three-level approach to attraction: Toward an understanding of pair relatedness. In T. L. Huston (Ed.), *Foundations of interpersonal attraction* (pp. 99–120). New York: Academic Press.
- Parks, M. (2006). *Communication and social networks*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of privacy*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Secklin, P. L. (2001). Losing Sammy: A catalyst for exiting an abusive relationship. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 6(1), 65–74.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (Eds.). (1998). *The dark side of close relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Vangelisti, A., & Perlman, D. (2006). *Handbook on personal relationships*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Weiss, R. S. (1974). The provisions of social relationships. In Z. Rubin (Ed.), *Doing unto others* (pp. 17–26). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wiseman, J. P. (1986). Friendship: Bonds and binds in a voluntary relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 3, 191–211.
- Wood, J. T., & Duck, S. W. (1995). Off the beaten track: New shores for relationship research. In J. T. Wood & S. W. Duck (Eds.), *Understudied relationships: Off the beaten track* (pp. 1–21). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.