

a functional, responsible, socially appropriate adult. The mother–child relationship changes over time framed by the tasks of the developing child. In the early months, the mother–child relationship is largely determined by the mother. For example, the child largely depends in infancy on the adult caregiver for basic care, for temporal regularity, and for decision making, whereas in the preschool ages, the child begins to become independent of the primary caregiver while sustaining a mental model that sustains them during long periods of separation. By early school years, the child gains mastery and learns healthy competition but still needs structure, limits, and rules. During the school-age years, the child explores the outside world and develops a strong sense of self. By the years 8 through 12, the child is developing a sense of self that involves mastery, reliance, control, esteem, and emotional literacy. Children play an increasing role in decision making, so by preteens they are making some of their own decisions and accepting the consequences for them by adolescence.

Mary Ainsworth's research with the Strange Situation demonstrated how the behaviors of young children differed in secure versus insecure attachment patterns, and similar findings have recently been demonstrated in older children. After identifying from a questionnaire whether the school-age child had a secure or insecure attachment, the two groups of children were given a series of photographs to view. Some photos were familiar, such as pictures of their mothers, and some were new or novel. The researchers found that secure versus insecure children processed information differently; the secure children attend more to novelty than the insecure children. Secure attachment frees the child to move on to the next landmark of development, exploration, and learning. From the early relationship, the child develops a secure "mental map" of the relationship. If the child experiences the relationship as positive, responsive, and nonintrusive, a mental template is formed that is generalized beyond the mother–child relationship. The child brings this attachment schema of feeling secure or not into new developmental challenges. The resulting mental template can provide direction and support even without the physical presence of the mother. Evidence suggests the internal working model of self and others, based on the adolescent and mother's relationship,

is associated with the adolescent emerging as an emotionally healthy adult.

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See also Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Theory; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Strange Situation

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MOTIVATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Motivation refers to the reason or reasons why people behave and are moved to action. Human

intention, will, and desire—all words used to capture motivation—have fascinated psychologists since the field of psychology began. At the heart of both research and theory on motivation is the idea that humans have an intrinsic need for social connection and relatedness. The desire for human connection is so strong that psychologists Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary have posited that humans have a fundamental “need to belong,” a need that is found in all cultures. Infants show an uncanny readiness to seek out and bond with other people, and adults continue to connect with close others throughout the life span. When asked about their life goals, most people list happy and fulfilling social relationships as most important, and those who neglect to place social needs among their top life goals tend to be less happy and healthy.

In the past several decades, psychology and related fields have witnessed considerable gains in understanding the central role of relationships in human motivation. Researchers have conducted many studies that span different kinds of relationships from parent–child relationships to romantic relationships, encompass different phases of relationships from newly developing dating relationships to long-term marriages, and include people at different developmental stages from infancy to old age. This entry examines the factors that influence the motivation for relationships, highlights several specific motives studied by psychologists, presents two prominent classification systems for social motives, discusses the ways in which close others can influence and shape our motives, highlights important changes in social motives across the life span, and reviews different types of methods and measures that researchers use to study motivation in human relationships.

Where Does the Motivation for Human Relationships Come From?

The human desire and need for connection has deep evolutionary roots and is present from the moment of birth. John Bowlby proposed that infants are born with an innate system called the “attachment behavioral system” that motivates them to seek proximity to caregivers in times of need. This system protects human beings of all

ages from threats, but is most directly and transparently observable during infancy. A key idea from Bowlby’s theory is that infants use their caregivers as a secure base: Only when infants are confident and secure that their caregivers will be there for them in times of threat or need can they act on their motivation to explore and learn about the world. The desire to form and maintain social bonds has both survival and reproductive benefits. Groups can share food, provide mates, and help care for offspring. Cues that indicate possible harm, such as illness, danger, nightfall, and disaster, seem to increase the need to be with others, underscoring the protective value of group membership. In the human evolutionary past, people who formed attachments were more likely to reproduce than were those who failed to form them, and long-term relationships increased the chances that offspring would reach maturity and reproduce in turn.

Other important influences on the human need for connection are not rooted in evolution. For example, sociocultural norms dictate that “normal” people ultimately settle down with a partner and have children, whereas single or childless people are seen as abnormal. People internalize these pressures, likely influencing their desire to find lifelong partners and raise families. There are also proximal factors based on an individual’s current social and cultural environment that influence the motivation to form relationships with romantic partners or friends. For example, a teenage boy who just moved to a new town may befriend the first boy whom he meets to cope with his sense of loneliness, but a popular girl in the same school may be choosier about the types of friends whom she lets into her inner circle as her affiliation needs have already been met.

What Kinds of Motives Do Psychologists Study?

Two particularly important social motives have been studied across a variety of relationship contexts. Dan McAdams defines the *intimacy motive* as a preference for close, warm, and communicative experiences with others, whereas the *power motive* is defined as the preference to feel strong and have influence over others. In a series of studies

of close friendships, people with high intimacy motivation reported interacting with and disclosing more to their friends, better listening skills, and more concern for their friends' well-being. In contrast, people with high power motivation reported trying to take charge of situations with their friends, make plans, and persuade others.

Two other motives studied by psychologists involve people's desires to maintain particular psychological states. *Self-enhancement motives* refer to people's desires to maintain positive views of themselves. When people are guided by self-enhancement motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who make them feel good about themselves, reflecting their need to be valued and admired by others. In the realm of interpersonal relationships, research has shown that people are more satisfied with their dating and marital relationships when their partners hold positive views of their qualities and traits. *Self-verification motives*, however, refer to people's desires to confirm and sustain their existing views of themselves. When people are guided by self-verification motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who confirm their self-concepts, reflecting their needs for consistency. For example, research has also shown that in marriages, people are more committed to spouses whose views of them are consistent with their own self-concepts, even when those self-concepts are negative. Both self-enhancement and self-verification motives likely guide people's behaviors in close relationships, and people may be guided by different motives in different situations or with different interaction partners.

How Do Researchers Classify Social Motives?

People pursue many different kinds of motives and goals in their social interactions. For example, people seek out close others to alleviate boredom, to obtain information about the world, to build their social networks, or to boost their own self-esteem, just to name a few. One useful distinction is whether a person acts to obtain positive outcomes (*approach motives*) or to avoid negative outcomes (*avoidance motives*). In the social domain, people can pursue approach motives such as to obtain intimacy, have fun, or grow as a person, or

they can pursue avoidance motives such as to avoid conflict, rejection, boredom, or loneliness. For example, at a party in her new college dorm, a student with strong approach social motives may focus on meeting new people and having a good time, whereas a student with strong avoidance social motives may spend his time monitoring his actions and focusing on ways to avoid rejection. As discussed by Shelly Gable, the distinction between approach and avoidance social motives has been used to understand a variety of topics in close relationships including sacrifice, sexuality, and relationship commitment. Across all these topics, approach motives generally lead to better social outcomes than do avoidance motives. For example, on days when people make sacrifices for a romantic partner for approach motives (such as to connect with or please their partners), they experience more excitement, enthusiasm, and overall relationship satisfaction. But, on days when they sacrifice for avoidance motives (such as to avoid the partner's anger or disappointment), they experience more guilt, hostility, and relationship conflict.

Another useful distinction is whether a person is motivated to perform a behavior that is a chosen and satisfying end in itself (*intrinsic motives*) or is motivated to perform a behavior for instrumental purposes or as the means to another end (*extrinsic motives*). For example, a man who has intrinsic motives may put energy into maintaining his marriage because he shares fun and pleasurable times with his partner, whereas a man with extrinsic motives may do so because he feels obligated to reciprocate the home-cooked meals and comfortable lifestyle his wife provides. Research by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan has shown that couples who are intrinsically motivated to remain in their relationships report greater feelings of love and faith in their relationships than do couples who are extrinsically motivated.

How Do Other People Influence and Shape Our Motives?

People do not make decisions about how to act in social situations in a vacuum. Interaction partners have a powerful influence on the choices that people make and the motives that guide behavior. An important influence on motivation in social

situations concerns the nature of the relationship between the interaction partners. One important distinction made by Margaret Clark and Judson Mills is between *communal relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with friends, family members, and romantic partners) and *exchange relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with strangers, acquaintances, and business partners). In communal relationships, people generally help another person out of a genuine concern and sense of responsibility for that person's welfare, whereas in exchange relationships, people tend to help another person to the extent that he or she has already helped them in the past or if they expect to receive help in the future. In short, the motivation to help other people depends largely on the nature of the relationship between interaction partners.

In romantic relationships in particular, partners have particularly strong influences on one another's motives. Because the things that affect one partner often affect the other, romantic partners are especially likely to consider each other's needs and concerns when making behavioral choices. For example, a woman may decide to sacrifice her girls' night out on the town to stay home and care for her sick husband. Or, a man may decide to forgive his girlfriend for making a nasty remark in front of his friends because the long-term peace and happiness of his relationship is his primary goal. When people make decisions such as these, they enact what Harold Kelley and John Thibaut referred to as a *transformation of motivation*, in which their own self-interested desires are replaced by motives that consider the need to coordinate with their partner's wishes and priorities and focus on the long-term future of their relationships. In short, people's social motives can be shaped both by their partners and by their own broader concerns about their relationship.

How Do Social Motives Change Over the Life Span?

Individuals shift their priorities and goals over the life course, including their goals that concern social interactions. According to Laura Carstensen, two central social motives follow different developmental trajectories. One essential human motive

is to seek information about the self and the social world (*the knowledge trajectory*). The fact that infants and children learn so much in the first few years of life reflects the readiness at birth for a great deal of social learning. The knowledge trajectory starts high during the early years of life and declines gradually over the life course as people accrue more knowledge and their futures grow shorter. The second class of human motives is emotional in nature and includes such motives as the desire to feel good, establish intimacy, and verify the self (*the emotion trajectory*). The emotion trajectory is highest during infancy and early childhood when emotional trust and relatedness are initially established, and then rises again in old age when future-oriented strivings are less relevant. Although both of these social motives operate throughout life, with age or other transitions such as moving from one place to another, knowledge-focused motives lose their importance and emotion-focused motives gain importance. As a result, the types of social partners that people choose and the dynamics of social interactions change in fundamental ways. For example, whereas a young child may try out different social behaviors to learn about himself and his role in the social world around him (e.g., by asking his mother many questions), an elderly woman may be more focused on connecting to and maintaining intimacy with those around her (e.g., by writing letters and placing phone calls to close friends).

How Do Researchers Study Motivation in Relationships?

Researchers use many different types of methods to study motivation in human relationships. One type of research involves the use of *cross-sectional surveys*, in which participants report on their social motives at one point in time. Gable has asked participants, at one point in time, to rate their motives in their dating relationships during an upcoming academic quarter. For example, participants indicate the extent to which they intend to try to "deepen my relationship with my romantic partner" (to assess approach social motives) and "avoid conflicts and disagreements with my romantic partner" (to assess avoidance social motives). A

second type of research involves the use of *daily experience surveys*, in which participants report on their social motives repeatedly over a fixed period of time (e.g., everyday for 14 consecutive days). Researchers using these methods are particularly interested in how people's social motives may change from one day to the next depending on variations in the social situation (e.g., how much conflict they experience on a particular day). A third type of research involves the use of *longitudinal surveys*, in which participants are tracked over a period ranging from several weeks to many years. For example, Carstensen has looked at how the same people pursue different kinds of social motives at different points in the life course.

The measures that people use to assess social motives also vary. One type includes *open-ended measures*, in which participants are asked to write or talk about the types of motives that they pursue in their social interactions. From their responses, researchers create coding schemes to distill the large number of responses into a smaller number of meaningful themes, for example themes that focus on intrinsic or extrinsic motives. A second type includes *close-ended measures*, in which participants indicate the extent of their agreement with a list of goals determined ahead of time by the researchers themselves. For example, M. Lynne Cooper and her colleagues developed a close-ended measure of sexual goals, asking participants to indicate the extent to which they engage in sex for approach goals (e.g., "I have sex to feel emotionally close to my partner") and avoidance goals (e.g., "I have sex because I don't want my partner to be angry with me"). A third type of measure includes *implicit measures* of social motives, based on the idea that people may not always have conscious access to their own motives. For example, in some studies using implicit measures, participants look at ambiguous pictures and respond to a set of statements by indicating how they might think or feel in the situation depicted in each picture (e.g., a man taking a test or a woman attending a party).

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Goals in Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Self-Verification

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