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Implicit Theories of Relationships: Orientations Toward Evaluation and Cultivation

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Implicit theories of relationships (ITRs) influence goals, motivations, attributions, and behavior in romantic relationships. We developed a model of ITRs that draws from social cognition, motivation, and achievement literatures, and derived conceptual parallels and hypotheses with regard to relationships. It is proposed that ITRs reflect the belief component of a larger system of motivations and goals that can influence the degree to which people are oriented toward the evaluation and cultivation of relationships. Research on ITRs is reviewed with regard to how they moderate well-documented associations between relationship perceptions and outcomes. Differences between ITRs and implicit theories in other domains are also discussed.

Individuals have different beliefs about what makes for a good relationship. These beliefs or implicit theories determine, in part, one's goals and motivations in relationships (Knee, 1998; Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001), much as implicit theories in other domains have been shown to determine goals and motivations in those contexts (see Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995, for review). Implicit theories of relationships (ITRs), as defined here, are characterized by a belief in romantic destiny and a belief in relationship growth. Destiny belief is defined as the belief that potential relationship partners are either compatible or they are not. Growth belief is defined as the belief that relationship challenges can be overcome. Theoretically, those who believe more (relative to less) strongly in destiny attempt to determine the compatibility of their partner and the viability of the relationship based on minimal information. They place a high value on determining whether a relationship is meant to be, and tend to diagnose the potential of the relationship based on specific events. Those who believe more (relative to less) strongly in growth are primarily interested in developing the relationship, and believe that relationships grow not despite obstacles but rather because of them. Destiny belief is linked to attempts to diagnose the status and potential success of the relationship, and growth belief is linked to attempts to maintain the relationship.

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Implicit Theories of Attributes

Implicit theories were first studied with regard to traits such as personality, intelligence, and morality (Dweck, 1996; Dweck et al., 1995; Dweck, Hong, & Chiu, 1993). Research on ITRs grew out of Dweck and colleagues' research on implicit theories in these other domains. Research has shown that implicit theories are relatively domain-specific such that the particular theories within a given domain (e.g., intelligence) most strongly predict behavior within that domain (e.g., giving up on a challenging test). Within Dweck's theoretical framework, a belief that certain traits are fixed and unchangeable is called an entity theory, and a belief that these traits are flexible and can be changed with effort is called an incremental theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Implicit theories have been conceptualized as schematic knowledge structures that involve specific beliefs about the stability of an attribute and those conditions that are likely to promote change (Ross, 1989). Historically, these beliefs have been examined in the achievement and social judgment literatures yielding a number of provocative findings.

Most of the work on implicit theories has centered on implicit theories of intelligence. This body of research has suggested that an entity belief about intelligence fosters concern about ability. These concerns are then manifested in dispositional inferences about ability following feedback, even in the face of limited or contradictory information. For example, those who hold an entity theory of intelligence seem to be particularly sensitive to early indications of potential failure, thus leading them to give up on challenging achievement tasks (Dweck, 1996; Dweck et al., 1995; Dweck et al., 1993; Hong, Chiu, & Dweck, 1995). In this domain, an entity theory (e.g., "You have a certain

amount of intelligence and you can't do much to change it") is linked to robust, global dispositional inferences about intelligence whereas an incremental theory predicts fewer dispositional and more provisional inferences (Dweck, 1991; Dweck et al., 1993). In addition, an entity belief about personality has been associated with making global trait inferences from brief samples of behavior, perceiving behavior as stable, and showing an increased likelihood to blame and punish others for undesirable behaviors (Erdley & Dweck, 1993). With regard to relationships, implicit theories of personality have been shown to moderate the correlation between individuals' views of their romantic partner and how satisfied they are in the relationship (Ruvolo & Rotondo, 1998). View of partner was defined as rating the partner on 24 personal characteristics. Results showed that the correlation between having a favorable view of one's partner and being satisfied in the relationship was weaker with an entity theory of personality.

From Attributes to Relationships

Implicit theories in other areas have been shown to be domain specific, and judgments in one domain are best predicted by implicit theories of attributes in the same domain (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck et al., 1993). Thus, Dweck and her colleagues have developed separate scales to identify people's implicit theories about intelligence, personality, and moral character (Dweck et al., 1995). Implicit theories set up different goals and orient individuals to focus on different factors for explaining performance. An entity theory is associated with performance goals and a focus on gaining favorable judgments and avoiding negative ones. Individuals holding an entity belief about intelligence focus more on fixed abilities rather than malleable aspects of the trait, leading them to explain negative performance more in terms of lack of ability rather than lack of effort. Thus, these individuals seem to be more prone to helpless responses in the face of failure (Diener & Dweck, 1980; Goetz & Dweck, 1980). Individuals with an incremental theory tend to be more mastery-oriented when faced with failure and tend to search for ways to improve ability and performance through increased effort and engaging in remedial actions such as help-seeking (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999). An incremental theory of intelligence orients an individual toward learning goals and increasing ability. Thus, implicit theories set up a general frame of reference from which to evaluate performance, abilities, and traits. ITRs grew out of Dweck and colleagues' work on implicit theories in these other domains. Thus, implicit theories in the relationships domain are thought to reflect similar orientations toward challenging relationship events and failures as implicit theories in other domains (Knee et al., 2001).

With regard to relationships, those who believe more strongly in romantic destiny tend to be especially sensitive to signs that indicate that the relationship is not meant to be. Indeed, Knee (1998) found that relationship survival was more strongly linked to initial satisfaction for those who believed more strongly in destiny. When those who believed more strongly in destiny initially felt more satisfied, their relationships lasted particularly long, whereas when they initially felt less satisfied, their relationships ended quickly. A stronger belief in destiny is associated with a more judgmental approach to relationships and a focus on fixed aspects of the relationship or the partner. Thus, when problems arise, they are more likely to view the problem as a sign that the relationship is not meant to be. Indeed, destiny belief has already been associated with disengaging from the relationship when there was a problem (Knee, 1998).

Those who more strongly endorse a growth belief about relationships tend to believe that successful relationships are developed by conquering obstacles and growing closer. Knee (1998) found that belief in growth was associated with fewer one-night stands during the first month of college and with dating a particular person for a longer period of time. Moreover, belief in growth was associated with attempts to maintain the relationship when there was a problem through a variety of coping strategies.

Measurement of ITRs

ITRs were originally measured with eight items administered on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Knee, 1998). Four items measured destiny belief and four items measured growth belief. For example, a destiny item is the following: "Potential partners are either compatible or they are not." A growth item is the following: "Challenges and obstacles in a relationship can make love even stronger." Factor analyses in several samples revealed that destiny and growth beliefs were independent. When items reflecting each belief were averaged, destiny and growth were uncorrelated ($r = -.01$). Later confirmatory factor analyses using a 15-item measure also revealed a clear two-factor structure in which destiny and growth beliefs were independent. This two-factor model fit the data better than a single-factor model (Knee et al., 2001). Finally, the most recent 22-item version of the ITR contains 11 destiny and 11 growth items and is stable across a variety of diverse samples. Table 1 provides all 22 items along with item-total correlations. Internal reliabilities for destiny and growth were .82 and .74, respectively, in a sample of 400 participants. Scores on destiny and growth are uncorrelated (*r*s typically range from –.01 to –.07, de-

TABLE 1. *Items on the 22-Item Implicit Theories of Relationships Scale Along With Item-Total Correlations*

Destiny Belief Items
.45–1. Potential relationship partners are either compatible or they are not.
.45–3. A successful relationship is mostly a matter of finding a compatible partner right from the start.
.48–5. Potential relationship partners are either destined to get along or they are not.
.54–7. Relationships that do not start off well inevitably fail.
.36–9. If a potential relationship is not meant to be, it will become apparent very soon.
.59–11. The success of a potential relationship is destined from the very beginning.
.61–13. To last, a relationship must seem right from the start.
.56–15. A relationship that does not get off to a perfect start will never work.
.55–17. Struggles at the beginning of a relationship are a sure sign that the relationship will fail.
.34–19. Unsuccessful relationships were never meant to be.
.53–21. Early troubles in a relationship signify a poor match between partners.
Growth Belief Items
.41–2. The ideal relationship develops gradually over time.
.49–4. A successful relationship evolves through hard work and resolution of incompatibilities.
.39–6. A successful relationship is mostly a matter of learning to resolve conflicts with a partner.
.42–8. Challenges and obstacles in a relationship can make love even stronger.
.42–10. Problems in a relationship can bring partners closer together.
.37–12. Relationships often fail because people do not try hard enough.
.26–14. With enough effort, almost any relationship can work.
.48–16. It takes a lot of time and effort to cultivate a good relationship.
.29–18. Without conflict from time to time, relationships cannot improve.
.41–20. Arguments often enable a relationship to improve.
.35–22. Successful relationships require regular maintenance.

Note: Destiny and growth items are typically alternated when administered. Destiny items are averaged to yield a destiny score. Growth items are averaged to yield a growth score. The resulting scores are independent ($r = -.01$).

pending on the sample). Confirmatory factor analysis of the 22-item ITR specifying a single factor solution in which all destiny and growth items were forced to load on a single dimension, did not fit the data well, as before, χ^2 (209, $N = 436$) = 1229.47, $p < .001$, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .72, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .11. Instead, as we have shown elsewhere, specifying independent destiny and growth factors provides a better fit, χ^2 (209, $N = 436$) = 707.29, $p < .001$, GFI = .86, RMSEA = .07. Further, allowing the factors to correlate does not significantly improve the fit, χ^2 (208, $N = 436$) = 705.12, $p < .001$, GFI = .86, RMSEA = .07.

Destiny belief is correlated positively with the belief that partners cannot change themselves or their relationship (Partners Cannot Change; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), as well as a pragmatic shopping-list approach to love (Pragma; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Growth belief is correlated negatively with the belief that partners cannot change and positively with a gradual, friendship-based approach to love (Storge; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). With regard to the Big Five dimensions of personality, destiny belief is associated with slightly less openness, and slightly more extraversion and neuroticism. Growth belief is associated with more conscientiousness and somewhat more agreeableness (Knee, 1998). ITRs are associated with Sprecher and Metts's (1989) romantic beliefs subscales such that destiny is associated with belief that there is only one potential partner, idealizing romance, and belief in love at first sight, whereas growth is associated with the belief that love will find a way. With regard to Druen's (1996) partner selection strategies, destiny belief is associated with searching for an ideal partner and believing that love conquers all, and growth belief is associated with working on relationships. ITRs are also associated with Rusbult's exit-voice-loyalty-neglect typology of responses to dissatisfaction in relationships (see Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). Specifically, growth belief is correlated with voicing concerns about the relationship, and being loyal to the relationship; destiny belief is correlated with neglecting the relationship. With regard to attachment dimensions, growth belief is modestly correlated with attachment security, but otherwise ITRs are not significantly correlated with the attachment dimensions of security, ambivalence, or avoidance. Finally, because destiny belief reflects the notion that a relationship's potential can be diagnosed, it is modestly associated with personal need for structure (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993) which captures the desire to seek certainty and know what one can expect from situations.

Further, ITRs are moderately correlated with implicit theories in other domains, although these other domains tap primarily the destiny component. For example, destiny belief is moderately correlated with having stronger entity theories of personality, morality, and intelligence. Growth belief is only slightly and nonsignificantly correlated with implicit theories in

these other domains (*r*s < .09). Destiny and growth beliefs are typically not significantly correlated with sex, age, whether one is currently in a relationship, length of relationship, number of previous intimate relationships, current relationship satisfaction, social desirability, or self-esteem.

The Independence of Destiny and Growth Beliefs

One important difference between implicit theories in other domains and ITRs is that the former are traditionally assessed as opposing ends of a single continuum whereas the latter have been found repeatedly to comprise independent dimensions (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2001; Knee, 1998; Knee et al., 2001). This difference is as much a conceptual issue as it is an issue of measurement. In the domain of relationships, it is somewhat desirable to believe both that potential relationships can be diagnosed and that relationships require maintenance. Thus, it is conceivable to hold both beliefs simultaneously.

In contrast, in other domains, attempts to measure entity and incremental beliefs as independent dimensions have been inconclusive because it is more socially desirable to endorse an incremental belief (e.g., that one can improve one's intelligence; Dweck et al., 1995). In Dweck and colleagues' framework, endorsement of an incremental theory is reflected by rejection of an entity theory. Several studies have indicated that even for those who endorse an entity belief, there is a strong tendency to endorse items indicative of an incremental theory, suggesting that incremental items are highly compelling and more socially desirable (see Dweck et al., 1995, for review). Thus, items depicting an incremental theory are not used in most of those studies. In contrast, ITRs are characterized by independent destiny and growth beliefs such that individuals can endorse both or neither, as well as the typical extreme combinations (higher on one and lower on the other). This affords a more complex theoretical framework in which the dimensions of relationship maintenance (growth) and relationship diagnosis (destiny) can be examined jointly, and seems to better capture lay people's beliefs about relationships. It is fairly common for participants to believe that, "Fate brings potential partners together, but once the relationship blooms, they must work hard to maintain it." The independence of destiny and growth beliefs also suggests that, in the domain of relationships, a growth belief is not necessarily more socially desirable than a destiny belief, because participants vary in their endorsement of each dimension. This may be partly due to the fact that both destiny and growth beliefs have a positive connotation, and both beliefs are positively correlated with traditional scales of romanticism.

Interestingly, the independence of destiny and growth beliefs suggests that each dimension can contribute uniquely to predicting and explaining relationship perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors. However, it also suggests that particular combinations, or interactive effects, of destiny and growth may be especially relevant. For example, those with the combination of a higher growth belief and a lower destiny belief (cultivation orientation) believe that relationships evolve through development, confrontation, and efforts to maintain and improve the relationship, and are less focused on diagnosing the potential of relationships. When cultivating, one's goal becomes the development and maintenance of the relationship without diagnosing or inferring grand meaning from otherwise minor incompatibilities. Those with the combination of a higher destiny belief and a lower growth belief (evaluation orientation) believe that relationships can be easily diagnosed and evaluated, but that they cannot be considerably improved. When evaluating, one's goal becomes the diagnosis of one's partner and relationship in an effort to determine whether the relationship would seem to have immediate promise, without attempting to improve the relationship.

In data analytic terms, this implies that although destiny and growth beliefs can be meaningful on their own (as main effects), they can also interact with each other in predicting or moderating relationship phenomena. Indeed, we often find the interaction of destiny and growth beliefs to be particularly interesting. We focus on the interactive extremes of destiny and growth beliefs in terms of evaluation and cultivation orientations for two reasons. First, these orientations reflect the clearest conceptual extremes and afford the most useful hypotheses. Second, research thus far has shown that the interactive effects of ITRs are often most clear when the effect of one belief is particularly strong (or weak) depending on the level of the other belief. For example, cultivation orientation tends to buffer negative consequences and evaluation orientation tends to exacerbate them (Knee et al., 2001; Knee, Patrick, Vietor, & Neighbors, 2002).

ITRs as Moderators of Perceptions and Outcomes

Although ITRs can have direct effects on inferences, they can also moderate the consequences of those inferences. For example, perceiving limitations in one's partner or the relationship can have different consequences depending on one's ITRs. Because ITRs, in part, determine how meaning will be ascribed to relationship-relevant events and partner qualities, the same events or qualities can take on different meaning with correspondingly different relationship implications. For example, considerable research has shown that idealistic

views of one's partner are associated with increased relationship satisfaction (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). However, this tendency to feel more satisfied when one views one's partner more favorably than one's partner views himself or herself may depend on one's ITRs. Indeed, in two studies, Knee et al. (2001) found that ITRs moderate the relation between wanting more in one's partner and feeling satisfied in the relationship. Study 1 defined "wanting more" in terms of perceiving a discrepancy between what one wants in an ideal partner and what one believes he or she has in a current partner. Further, this discrepancy was measured in both direct and less-direct ways. Across several indexes of discrepancy from an ideal, wanting more in one's partner was consistently and strongly related to feeling less happy with the relationship. However, this relation was moderated by destiny and growth beliefs such that "wanting more" was less strongly linked to one's satisfaction when one had a cultivation orientation (higher growth and lower destiny beliefs). With a cultivation orientation, people were able to acknowledge their partner's less positive attributes and still remain relatively satisfied. In this way, these individuals did not view their partner's imperfections as fatal flaws in the relationship.

Study 2 tested whether ITRs moderate the projected illusions hypothesis (Murray et al., 1996). It was found that viewing one's partner more favorably than one's partner views himself or herself was generally linked to feeling more satisfied with the relationship. This relation was moderated by ITRs such that the link between viewing one's partner favorably and feeling satisfied was weaker among those who believed more strongly in growth, without regard to destiny belief.

The moderating effects of ITRs are not limited to perceptions of one's partner. For example, it is plausible that conflict in relationships could either bring partners closer or force them apart, again depending on one's ITRs. When one holds a belief that conflict is a healthy part of relationships and can bring partners closer by resolving it, then differences and disagreements can take on different meaning than when one believes that conflict is a sign of insurmountable problems in the relationship. This notion of increased commitment as a function of relationship adversity is not new (see Lydon, 1999). However, for some partners, the very presence of differences may be enough to strain the relationship, whereas others view it as an opportunity to learn more about their partner and develop the relationship. A recent series of studies was designed to test this hypothesis (Knee et al., 2002). In Study 1, 128 individuals in romantic relationships kept event-contingent diaries, recording every disagreement they and their partner had over a 10-day period. "Disagreement" was broadly defined as "anytime it becomes evident to you that you and your partner disagree on an opinion, perspective, idea, goal, etc." Relationship quality was assessed after each disagreement as well. Multilevel analyses showed that, consistent with the hypothesis, the association between having longer conflicts and reporting reduced relationship quality afterward was generally strong, except among those who were both higher in growth and lower in destiny. Among these individuals who were oriented toward cultivation, there was virtually no relation between the length of disagreements and reduced relationship quality on a daily basis.

In Study 2, 75 dating couples discussed problems in their relationship, with commitment measured before and after the discussion. Multilevel analyses examined changes in commitment. As hypothesized, an orientation toward cultivation was associated with less decrease in commitment after discussing problems with one's partner. Further, because those with stronger growth beliefs are particularly motivated to improve the relationship when it is lacking, the relation between growth belief and commitment was stronger when one had a less favorable view of one's partner. Thus, an orientation toward cultivation seems to buffer the negative consequences of adverse relationship experiences. Taken together, it appears that an orientation toward cultivation, and growth belief in particular, can buffer the negative impact of arguments, discrepancies, and differences of opinion—events that normally are associated with a decline in satisfaction and commitment.

The moderating effects of ITRs found thus far may reflect both cognitive and motivational mechanisms. The cognitive mechanism stems from the fact that a cultivation orientation is characterized by a belief that problems can be overcome and that the relationship's potential is not readily diagnosed. Perhaps the partner's negative qualities recede into the background, or perhaps partners come to authentically understand and appreciate each other's faults and weaknesses. The motivational mechanism underlying cultivation may allow one to feel less threatened by conflict and discrepant qualities between oneself and one's partner, given that cultivation involves viewing such attributes as latent and emergent rather than immediately evident. They may be motivated to maintain and improve the relationship, and acknowledging limitations and weaknesses would seem to be a key asset in this process. ITRs thus reflect both cognitive and motivational processes that can influence one's relationship-relevant perceptions, emotions, and behavior in meaningful ways.

From Orientations to Behavioral Outcomes

Levy, Plaks, and Dweck (1999) viewed implicit theories broadly as two modes of social thought. One mode is organized around static traits, leading one to seek trait information, view traits as causes of behav-

ior, draw trait-centered inferences, and categorize people by traits. The other mode is organized around more dynamic psychological mediators, leading one to consider people's goals, needs, and mental states. We view evaluation and cultivation orientations as different modes of thought as well. One mode is based on a set of beliefs that relationships are relatively static, rigid, and diagnosable with little opportunity for improvement. The other mode is based on the beliefs that relationships are dynamic and can be cultivated and developed, and their potential not readily diagnosed. These orientations come to influence relationship judgments, attributions, and inferences in much the same manner as they do in other domains.

Research on implicit theories in other domains has shown that implicit theories can influence attributions, emotions, and behavior at both trait and state levels (see Dweck et al., 1995, for review). In particular, implicit theories of intelligence were recently linked to attributions and coping strategies in three studies (Hong et al., 1999). This research revealed that implicit theories can be measured overtly but can also be induced situationally to influence attributions about one's performance and willingness to seek and accept help. Whether measured or induced, those who believed that intelligence could be improved made stronger attributions to effort and were more likely to take remedial action when performance was unsatisfactory (Hong et al., 1999). We propose that a similar process occurs with evaluation and cultivation orientations in which both overtly measured beliefs as well as induced orientations toward relationships can influence attributions for relationship events and willingness to seek help in response to relationship problems. Thus, although ITRs have been shown to be relatively stable individual differences over time, they are also somewhat open to experience, as are most relationship knowledge structures and schema. For example, Knee (1998) found that the test–retest reliability of destiny belief was lower whereas that of growth was nonsignificantly higher when one had recently experienced a traumatic relationship event. We believe that evaluation and cultivation orientations, of which ITRs are perhaps a more stable component, can be induced momentarily much as Hong and colleagues (1999) demonstrated in the domain of intelligence.

Figure 1 illustrates how ITRs can be viewed as part of a larger framework that distinguishes between cultivation and evaluation orientations toward relationships. ITRs are but one component of these orien-

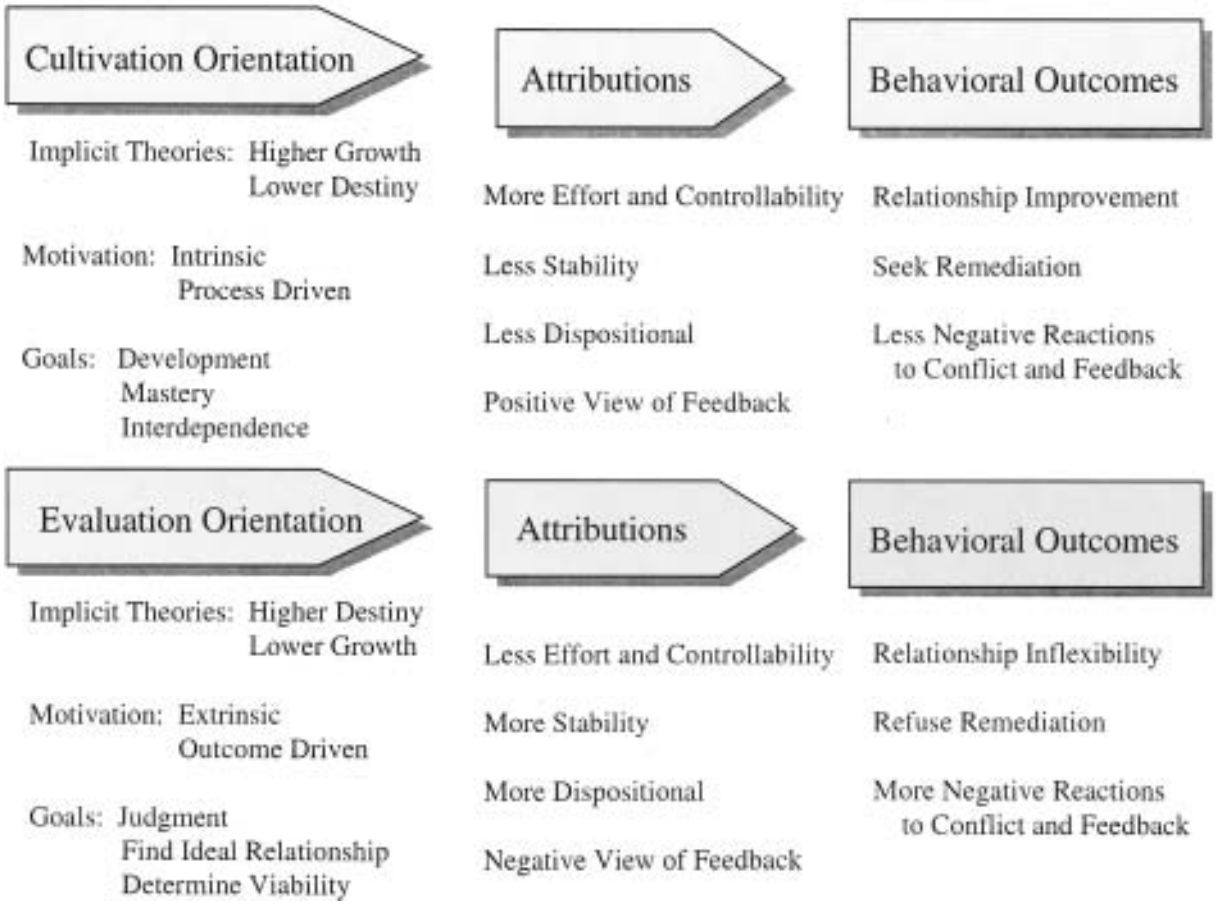

Figure 1. Conceptual model of how evaluation and cultivation orientations may influence attributions and behavioral outcomes.

tations. Based on Dweck and colleagues' (1995) research along with our own research on relationships, we view a cultivation orientation as containing three components: (a) a stable belief component comprised of higher growth and lower destiny beliefs, (b) a motivational component that reflects a desire to develop the relationship for its own sake, and (c) a goal component in which one intends to master relationship problems, interpret feedback informatively and nondefensively, and become interdependent with the partner. An evaluation orientation contains the following three components: (a) a stable belief component comprised of higher destiny and lower growth beliefs, (b) a motivational component that reflects an outcome-driven desire to evaluate and diagnose the relationship's potential, and (c) a goal component in which one intends to judge the partner and determine the viability of the relationship. Each of these components has been established in the social cognition and motivation literatures, but not necessarily with regard to relationships.

An important outcome of evaluation and cultivation orientations includes the emotional reactions engendered by viewing conflict as something that can or cannot be overcome. Indeed, Knee et al. (2001) found that ITRs predicted affective reactions on learning that one's partner views the relationship differently. First, being higher in growth belief (without regard to destiny belief) predicted greater happiness and less depression after discussing discrepant views of the relationship. Thus, the value of believing that relationship limitations can be overcome should not be understated. Indeed, the benefits of growth belief became even more impressive when considered in combination with destiny belief. Specifically, those oriented toward cultivation felt increased positivity whereas those oriented toward evaluation felt increased hostility after discussing discrepant views of the relationship with their partner. When oriented toward cultivation, limitations and weaknesses become opportunities for closeness and understanding without diagnosis of the relationship's potential. When oriented toward evaluation, even small differences can take on strong meaning, possibly leading to stronger, more judgmental inferences about one's partner in combination with feelings that the differences are insurmountable. Indeed, using a slightly different method of measuring ITRs, Franiuk et al. (2001) recently found that feeling one's specific partner was ideal predicted relationship satisfaction and longevity to a greater extent for those with stronger destiny beliefs.

Motivation

The motivation behind a cultivation orientation is thought to be largely intrinsic and improvement-driven, with an emphasis on mastery and flexibility in reacting to and dealing with relationship challenges. Similar motives have been examined in the achievement and motivation literatures, albeit with regard to different outcomes. For example, Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991) have elaborated on the nature and process of growth motivation from the perspective of self-determination theory. This other literature has shown how an orientation toward growth and mastery can positively influence academic achievement, mental and physical health, as well as interpersonal behavior (e.g., Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996; Koestner & Zuckerman, 1994; Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan, & Deci, 1996). A motivation orientation toward growth and improvement has also been examined with regard to the self (Deci & Ryan, 1987, 1991). In particular, such studies have linked an orientation toward growth and improvement with fewer self-enhancement strategies including the self-serving bias, self-handicapping, and defensive coping (Knee & Zuckerman, 1996, 1998).

Recently, Knee, Patrick, Vietor, Nanayakkara, and Neighbors (2002) examined self-determination as growth motivation in relationships. Growth motivation was defined as an orientation toward improvement, choicefulness, and authenticity with regard to oneself and others and was based on Deci and Ryan's conceptualization of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As self-determination theory would predict, an orientation toward growth and improvement was associated with (a) less tendency to view an ideal partner as a function of one's view of self, (b) more active and integrative coping strategies, (c) less denial and fewer avoidance strategies, and (d) decreases in negative emotion, along with more positive interaction behaviors when discussing contrary relationship perceptions with one's partner. These findings are consistent with previous research regarding self-determination and interpersonal outcomes (Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990; Hodgins et al., 1996). Moreover, these results suggested the important ways in which a general motivation toward growth in relationships is beneficial by allowing people to approach threats as challenges, adversity as opportunity, and conflict as the potential for new appreciation and understanding.

Recent data indicate that ITRs are substantially and meaningfully correlated with motivation orientations. For example, growth belief is associated with an orientation toward autonomy and feeling intrinsically motivated to be in the relationship, and destiny belief is associated with an orientation toward feeling controlled and being extrinsically motivated to be in the relationship (Patrick & Knee, 2002). Extrinsic relationship motivation involves being in the relationship for reasons other than the spontaneous feelings and pleasures of the relationship (e.g., rewards, ap-

proval from others). Because destiny belief centers on diagnosing a relationship's potential, it is especially important for those higher in destiny belief to associate their relationship with positive experiences. These positive experiences and other relationship rewards confirm that the relationship is viable and meant to be. In addition, extrinsic relationship motivation includes feedback and approval from other people (e.g., family and friends). This feedback provides additional diagnostic information about the potential of the relationship, and thus is important to those higher in destiny belief.

Along these lines, a recent study suggests that ITRs moderate the link between relationship motivation and relationship quality (Patrick & Knee, 2002). Specifically, we found that being higher in growth belief (without regard to destiny belief) buffers the negative consequences of having extrinsic relationship motivation. When people believe that relationships can be improved, feeling obligated to the relationship does not seem so bad. When one feels stuck in the relationship, discussing problems with one's partner maintains commitment if one believes the relationship can be improved. In addition, being higher in destiny belief exacerbates the negative consequences of having extrinsic relationship motivation. Specifically, when one is extrinsically motivated to be in the relationship, a stronger destiny belief (without regard to growth belief) is linked to feeling less committed after discussing relationship problems.

Another way in which motivation affects relationships is in openness to experiences within the relationship. One might predict that cultivation would be associated with acknowledging challenges to the relationship and attempting to deal with them openly and directly, rather than denying that they exist or giving up and abandoning the relationship altogether (Hodgins & Knee, in press; Knee et al., 2001). It is important to note that the motivation behind evaluation and cultivation orientations may not be all that different. In both cases, people will want to learn more about the nature of the relationship. It is the underlying goals that may best distinguish between evaluation and cultivation orientations. When oriented toward evaluation, one attempts to diagnose the future potential of the relationship, whereas when oriented toward cultivation, one attempts to improve the relationship. It could be argued that by improving the relationship, one is improving and expanding the self, and thus the motivation behind a cultivation orientation may reflect a desire for self-expansion as well (Aron & Aron, 1997). Indeed, ITRs have been correlated with inclusion of other in the self. Specifically, growth belief (and not destiny belief) is associated with greater self-expansion when operationalized as Aron and colleagues' (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self scale.

Attributions

In Dweck and colleagues' early work, attributions played a key role in how implicit theories were thought to influence coping with challenges (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). That earlier work presumed that implicit theories set up goals which in turn set up attributions and responses. However, more recent research has suggested that implicit theories are more consistently predictive of attributions and responses than are the corresponding goal orientations (Hong et al., 1999). We think that evaluation and cultivation orientations may influence attributions in relationships in a manner similar to implicit theories in other domains. Specifically, those who are oriented to evaluate relationships should make stronger attributions to stable causes, and weaker attributions to effort and controllability for negative relationship events. This pattern of attributions follows from an evaluation orientation for two reasons. First, the higher destiny belief component predisposes people to diagnose relationship potential, and stable attributions may facilitate such diagnoses. Second, the lower growth belief component of evaluation orientation involves not believing that things can be changed, which inherently involves attributions about effort and control over the course of the relationship.

Those with a cultivation orientation should make stronger attributions to effort and controllability, and weaker attributions to stability as causes for negative relationship events. First, the higher growth belief component deals with believing that relationships can be improved, lending itself to effort and control attributions. Second, the lower destiny belief component deals with not believing that the relationship's potential can be readily diagnosed, and thus suggests a lack of stability in the course of the relationship.

Dispositional Inferences

Chiu, Hong, and Dweck (1997) examined the relation between implicit theories of personality and lay dispositionism. Lay dispositionism refers to people's tendency to use traits as the basic unit of analysis in social perception. In Study 1, results suggested that those with an entity theory tended to expect trait-relevant behavior to be consistent across time and situations. Those with an incremental theory did not predict the same relative likelihood of a person displaying the same kind of behavior in different situations. In Study 2, participants with an entity belief about personality were more likely to predict the target's future behavior in a particular situation based on information about the target person's traits. Study 3 examined the likelihood of those with an entity theory confidently inferring traits from a particular behavior. Findings from this study further suggested that, for those who hold an entity theory of personality, dispositional traits mediate

behaviors, leading to a belief that behaviors are consistent across situations.

With regard to ITRs and inferences in relationships, we would expect that an orientation toward evaluation would promote stronger trait inferences about one's romantic partner and the relationship, using relatively limited samples of behavior. For example, when oriented toward evaluation, one may come to view brief samples of behavior as strongly indicative of the future, and thus come to believe that a relationship is desirable and promising or undesirable and hopeless. An orientation toward cultivation would promote less extreme inferences about the partner and relationship, or at least more positive expectations about working through potential problems. For example, if Jane were oriented toward evaluation, she may be more sensitive to negative aspects of the partner and relationship, and interpret the occasional argument as an indication that the relationship will always be hindered by disagreements that cannot be resolved. However, if Jane were oriented toward cultivation, she may view the same series of occasional arguments as opportunities to learn about each other and become closer without inferring grand conclusions about the relationship's potential. Thus, the perceived meaning and consequences of the same event can be rather different depending on one's orientation, beliefs, and motivation at the time that it occurs. Indeed, Dweck and colleagues have shown that the belief that attributes are fixed in a particular domain predicts global dispositional inferences for self and other, even in the face of limited evidence. In addition, the belief in fixed attributes leads to an over-reliance on dispositional information in making judgments and decisions. The belief that attributes are flexible predicts inferences that are more specific, conditional, and provisional (Dweck et al., 1993).

Reactions to Feedback

Implicit theories in the achievement literature have traditionally been linked with reactions to negative feedback on tasks related to the domain of the particular theory. For example, people who believe in the fixed nature of intelligence tend to give up and abandon difficult math problems following negative feedback, presumably because their static view of ability leads to stable attributions for performance (Dweck et al., 1995). It would seem that romantic relationships, too, tend to be replete with feedback, often of the unsolicited variety. Although the nature of feedback in everyday romantic relationships is not as clear and unambiguous as manipulated feedback in experimental studies on intelligence, evaluative information regarding the partner's performance (broadly defined), or the relationship in general, is quite common. Feedback in the proposed model of relationships could be broadly conceived as any evaluative information or cue that may be interpreted as implying something about the ability of one's partner or the relationship to continue satisfactorily.

Probably the most common example of feedback within the relationship is when one partner raises concerns about the relationship, ranging from relatively minor issues ("We don't do enough fun things together") to potentially more serious matters ("You don't understand me"). If oriented toward evaluation, feedback about the relationship can take on stronger meaning, with more serious implications about the future success of the relationship, in part because they do not believe that such difficulties can be overcome. Regardless of how serious the issue may appear on the surface, an orientation toward cultivation would promote less stable inferences about the relationship, and an improvement-driven perspective, because of the beliefs that problems can be resolved and a relationship's potential cannot be easily diagnosed. So, when one's partner claims "You don't understand me," one who is evaluation-oriented may infer that understanding will never be possible, and that this diagnosis is not conducive to romantic bliss. One who is cultivation-oriented, however, may infer that now is the time to better attempt to understand one's partner, and that with enough effort and time, understanding will come.

Feedback about the relationship can also originate from one's friends and relatives. Others may provide potentially evaluative information such as, "You two seem perfect together." When oriented toward evaluation, this feedback can take on strong meaning along with inferences about the future stability of the relationship. When oriented toward cultivation, this same feedback may seem relatively meaningless as people are not thought to be "matched for each other" to begin with, and because relationships are thought to develop and change along the way such that today's mismatch may be tomorrow's synchrony. It is important to note that it is not the nature of the feedback per se that is relevant to how ITRs influence inferences, reactions, and behavior, but rather it is the meaning that is assigned to the feedback as a function of the ITRs and orientations. The same feedback can take on rather different meaning, suggesting different relationship implications, depending on what one believes about relationships and how one is oriented.

Reactions to Negative Partner Behavior

Implicit theories of morality have also been shown to predict the extent to which people seek out and utilize character information when making decisions about one's guilt or innocence (Gervey, Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1999). Specifically, in three studies, when defendant respectability was manipulated, information about the defendant's appearance, clothing, and lifestyle affected entity theorists' character inferences and

verdicts more than those of incremental theorists. Further, when given the opportunity to request additional information about the defendant that they thought would be relevant to the verdict, entity theorists were more likely to seek dispositional information. Comparatively, incremental theorists did not consider information such as the style of clothing, or character of the defendant in making their judgments (Gervey et al., 1999). In another series of studies, entity theorists were found to believe more strongly in duty-based behavior than rights-based behavior, and thus tend to view violations of existing codes of conduct and expectations as less acceptable, and are less tolerant of deviance (Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997). This same research found that entity theorists of morality are also more likely to impose punishment or issue directives to transgressors. More generally, when people are asked how they would deal with another person's disreputable actions or transgressions, entity theorists tend to propose punishment and retaliation whereas incremental theorists tend to propose education and reform (Dweck, 1996). Individuals who believe in fixed traits tend to more readily infer global traits from limited, concrete behaviors compared to those who believe that traits can change.

Negative behavior is all too common in many romantic relationships. Based on the proposed framework, evaluation and cultivation orientations may influence how one interprets and assigns meaning to such events. Specifically, an evaluation orientation may be associated with stronger character inferences from relatively limited samples of behavior. Thus, a partner's "one-night stand" may take on far greater meaning, with the assumption that the behavior reflects something fundamental about the nature of the partner and one's relationship. Having higher destiny and lower growth beliefs could make even a single event seem indicative of a deeper truth and a repeatable pattern. Consequently, the evaluation-oriented partner may make strong and stable negative attributions to the partner and the relationship, bringing to mind "once a cheater, always a cheater." This could be a rather different inference compared to a partner who was oriented toward cultivation. Cultivation orientation could lead one to seek mediators of the behavior, with less emphasis on judgment and more emphasis on remediation and improvement. For example, in the case of a single instance of infidelity, someone with a cultivation orientation may seek out information about the circumstances that may have facilitated unfaithful behavior (e.g., decline in closeness). Moreover, a cultivative orientation may motivate the thwarted partner to examine weaknesses in the relationship that could be addressed to prevent infidelity in the future. A cultivation orientation may make one more motivated to understand the conditions that surrounded the negative behavior, and seek a supportive, less judgmental method of remediation.

In a preliminary study of the role of ITRs in responses to romantic infidelity, 149 participants were randomly assigned to read one of four scenarios about infidelity which varied according to relationship prognosis (i.e., good or poor) and transgressor of infidelity (i.e., self or partner; Patrick, Knee, & Lonsbary, 2001). After reading the scenario, participants answered two open-ended items designed to capture their anticipated responses to such a situation. Results revealed that what people believe about relationships has a strong effect on how they respond to even hypothetical relationship threats. Those who were oriented toward evaluation and in the good prognosis condition were more likely to blame their partner, regardless of the transgressor of infidelity. In addition, an orientation toward evaluation was associated with less blame of a problem in the relationship, even when participants had been told "you aren't sure if [this partner] is the right one for you." Taken together, these findings seem to suggest that an evaluation orientation may sometimes involve evaluating the partner rather than the relationship, and also that the meaning of such single-event instances can take on relatively different meaning depending on one's ITRs.

Seeking Remediation

Implicit theories of intelligence have been linked to remedial action following unsatisfactory performance (Hong et al., 1999). Specifically, incremental theorists were more willing than entity theorists to take a remedial course that could potentially improve their performance following negative feedback. ITRs and their corresponding goal orientations may analogously influence one's willingness to seek help when faced with relationship difficulties. Seeking help may seem relatively pointless when one is oriented toward evaluation because one interprets relationship difficulties as evidence that this is not the right partner, and believes that such difficulties cannot be overcome. On the other hand, seeking help may seem particularly useful when oriented toward cultivation because one believes that the future of the relationship is not predetermined and that relationship challenges can be overcome. Thus, relationship counseling, whether through professional services or friends and family, may seem more potentially fruitful when operating according to certain beliefs and their corresponding goal orientations. Again, it is not the actual utility of counseling or remedial help that is important here, but rather the way in which one's beliefs and orientations guide expectations and inferences about the likelihood of improvement in the face of problems. In this way, seeking help for a dying relationship may not always yield improved results, but regardless, one should be more likely to invite assistance when oriented toward cultivation.

It is not clear whether a cultivation orientation would lead one to predominantly infer that one can tackle relationship problems oneself or through the help of others, but in extreme cases, seeking help from others may seem most useful to those with a cultivation orientation. An evaluation orientation, rather than leading to the seeking of help, may lead to the seeking of additional evaluation from others. Specifically, feedback may seem particularly important when oriented toward evaluation, not because it can guide one on how to improve and develop the relationship, but because it can sharpen one's evaluation of the future potential of the relationship by making the diagnosis of problems (and hence the relationship's future) that much more evident.

Developmental Origins

ITRs probably have a variety of origins, some of which have been described elsewhere. For example, ITRs may develop vicariously from watching parents engage in their own relationships (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). If a child never saw his or her parents quarreling, then the child may feel that conflict is not a usual occurrence in a relationship, and therefore, when it does occur it may signal that something is very wrong. On the other hand, a child who sees his or her parents disagree and come to some resolution may come to feel less threatened by conflict because they have seen first hand that it is resolvable. Sometimes, however, parents fight and then divorce. What effect might this have on the developing relationship theories of the child? One can envision at least three possible outcomes. First, the child may develop a fatalistic view of relationships such that, no matter what one does, relationships are bound to bring you sadness and pain. This may be especially the case if the parents fought often and parted badly. A second outcome may result from parents who try to salvage a deteriorating relationship out of genuine care for each other. However, despite their efforts there are certain irreconcilable differences. If these parents part well and have successful remarriages, the child may decide that relationships can be successful, but only if the partners are well matched to begin with. A third possible outcome may result from watching parents fight and divorce if the child develops a reactance belief. The child may see the difficulties and pain that the parents experienced, and become determined that he or she will not experience the same. This child may energetically seek to find "good matches" and then work to maintain or improve them.

Research on implicit theories in other domains has suggested additional origins. Benenson and Dweck (1986) found that trait explanations for behaviors emerged in the social domain earlier than in the academic domain. Their reasoning was that children experience the social domain before the academic domain. This rationale fits well with the notion that implicit theories of intelligence can evolve from relationships with one's parents and other caregivers. For example, Jane is playing with her friend Susie, who is acting very unpleasantly, and Jane runs to her mother crying about how Susie was treating her. There are at least two reactions that Jane's mother could offer. One that might reinforce stable, trait-based explanations for behavior could involve the following: "Susie is a bad girl for behaving that way; maybe you shouldn't play with her." In contrast, one that might reinforce unstable, situation-based explanations for behavior could involve the following: "Why don't you ask Susie why she acted that way? Maybe she was just having a bad day." The first response might indicate to Jane that people's actions are a reflection of their underlying personalities and that they are likely to remain the same over time. Therefore, Jane may come to infer that if a person behaves unpleasantly, it reflects something fundamental and unchangeable such that future interactions would also be unpleasant. Consequently, Jane may steer clear of forming relationships with people who seem unpleasant, even from a single occasion. In contrast, the mother's second response might give Jane the impression that people's behavior can be influenced by a particular situation and that they do not necessarily act that way all the time. Therefore, a relationship with someone could be rewarding if one takes the time to learn why the person was behaving that way.

A similar process may be at work with regard to ITRs. Now imagine that Jane is dating Tom. Tom calls to cancel a date at the last minute. Jane's mother could respond in a way that reinforces the evaluative notion that "He isn't good enough for you" or "You can do better than him." She could also respond in a way that reinforces the cultivative notion that "I'm sure if you ask Tom to explain why he cancelled it, the two of you can get past this." The modeling of evaluative and cultivative orientations is almost certainly not limited to parents, but rather carries over from friends, siblings, role models, and other sources of feedback and modeling that are important to children and adolescents.

Also, Dweck (1998) suggested that the origins of mastery and helpless responses could result, in part, from parental responses to failures. Specifically, children with a mastery response (and its corresponding incremental belief) may have had experiences with parents who encouraged them to try again after failure, perhaps offering strategies for doing so and praising the efforts they made. Children with a helpless response (and its corresponding entity belief) may have had experiences with parents who only praised success and were critical of failed attempts, applying the criticism not just to the attempt itself, but to the child as well. Indeed, in six

studies, Mueller and Dweck (1998) showed that praise for success had more negative consequences for students' achievement motivation than praise for effort. Children who were praised for intelligence cared more about performance goals relative to learning goals compared to children who were praised for effort. These children also displayed less task persistence, less task enjoyment, more attributions to low ability, and worse task performance than children who were praised for effort. Further, it seems likely that praise for good performance may lead to viewing intelligence as a fixed trait. Specifically, children who were praised for intelligence described it as a fixed trait more than children who were praised for hard work, who believed intelligence to be subject to improvement.

In romantic relationships, failure may involve getting turned down when asking for a date, or getting into an argument with one's significant other. The parental (and peer) response to these and other relationship "milestones" may set the stage for the notion that relationships are either destined to work or they are not, and that with enough effort a relationship with almost anyone can be nurtured. Parents' reaction on bringing home one's first date may be one such example. In some cases, parents might proceed to immediately evaluate their child's romantic interest, attempting to diagnose the character of the person and the long-term potential for the incipient relationship. In other cases, parents might afford support and encouragement of almost any new date, and virtually unconditional support of the evolving relationship (despite what the cat dragged in). These reactions may become internalized by the child across repeated salient episodes such that evaluation or cultivation goals become typical of how they view and interact with potential romantic partners. Thus, they may come to gradually diagnose and evaluate potential partners, attempting to proceed as they feel their parents and friends (and others whose opinions they value) would. Alternatively, if parents and peers have largely modeled cultivation goals and unconditionally supportive behavior with regard to relationship partners, the child may gradually become less concerned by what some people would consider grave weaknesses or deficits in potential dates.

Revision of ITRs Based on Experience

Like many other knowledge structures about relationships (e.g., working models, relational schemas, and scripts), ITRs are probably susceptible to revision as a function of salient relationship experiences. For example, research on working models of attachment has shown that involvement in satisfying relationships at one point in time is associated with increased security at a later time (Hammond & Fletcher, 1991). Similarly, relationship breakups have been shown to be associated with change from secure to insecure working models, and avoidant models are susceptible to becoming less avoidant on formation of a new relationship (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994). Changes in relationship knowledge structures have been found to be particularly likely when significant events in the social environment disconfirm existing expectations (Feeney, 1999; Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994). In a similar manner, ITRs are also thought to both guide the interpretation of relational experiences as well as be somewhat sensitive to particularly salient relational events. In this way, one's belief in destiny could be strengthened through involvement in a relationship in which everything seems wonderful from the beginning and a positive future seems evident, or through involvement in a relationship that never seemed right from the beginning and indeed ended up dissolving. Conversely, one's destiny belief could be weakened if one inaccurately diagnoses a relationship as ideal and yet it fails. One's growth belief could analogously be strengthened through times in which problems were discussed and resolved and the relationship benefited. Growth belief could be weakened through times when no amount of effort seemed to help. As mentioned earlier, in support of the notion that ITRs are somewhat sensitive to extreme or salient relationship experiences, Knee (1998) found lower test–retest correlations for ITRs when participants had reported a relationship event as their single most stressful experience over a semester.

It is also possible that ITRs can change somewhat within the same relationship. For example, someone who initially has a lower growth belief may become involved in a relationship in which they are able to witness the benefits of confronting and resolving issues, thus coming to believe more strongly in growth. In addition, someone who is initially lower in destiny belief may come to believe that their partner is truly "the one" for them, particularly if they remain very satisfied with the relationship. Indeed, one's partner's beliefs and behaviors in the relationship may be a major factor in the extent to which ITRs evolve in the context of any particular relationship. Moreover, it is not yet clear how destiny belief functions in longer-term committed relationships. Although the destiny items seem to be especially relevant to the early stages of relationships, it seems likely that the diagnostic process continues to be active, particularly in the presence of unexpected relationship events, both positive and negative. However, these processes remain to be documented empirically.

Domain Specificity

Implicit theories in other areas have been shown to be domain specific, and judgments in one domain are best predicted by implicit theories of attributes in the

same domain (Chiu et al., 1997; Dweck et al., 1993). Thus, although there is considerable conceptual overlap between ITRs and implicit theories of other attributes, we would expect that ITRs tend to better predict relationship phenomena. A key difference between implicit theories of attributes and ITRs is that the latter are explicitly relational whereas the former are largely individual. Beliefs about relationships may indeed influence (and be influenced by) the relation between partners, including how they view each other and what they come to infer about the relationship as a function of relevant events. In contrast, beliefs about individual attributes probably more often influence one's own goals, attributions, and behaviors. It may be premature to conclude that beliefs about relationships tend to be more complex than beliefs about individual attributes. However, the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of people in close relationships tend to be interdependent, such that they mutually influence each other. In addition, previous research has demonstrated that people develop rather elaborate schema about both partners and relationships (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996; Murray & Holmes, 1993). This additional complexity of relationships may require a more vast assessment of the particular beliefs, goals, and attributions that are relevant to specific behaviors, and during a specific interaction sequence.

We believe that there may be an additional level of domain-specificity within the realm of relationships. Whereas people may have a global set of beliefs about what makes for good relationships, there may also be particular aspects of relationships that they believe are especially fixed or malleable. For example, Jane may believe that, generally, successful relationships are nurtured and that they develop through the process of discussing differences and resolving controversy. However, she may also believe that if there is no initial chemistry or physical attraction between partners, the relationship is not meant to be. Thus, if she feels physically attracted to her partner, Jane may believe that all other problems in the relationship can be managed and dealt with. Indeed, previous research has shown that individuals view certain factors as crucial to relationship success including trust, respect, sex, and love (Fletcher & Kininmonth, 1992). Because individuals tend to value particular characteristics in an ideal mate (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999), they may also have implicit beliefs about the fixedness or malleability of these traits. The importance of particular characteristics has not yet been examined with regard to ITRs. People may come to value something because it comes easily (e.g., you either have a good sex life or you do not). People may also come to value those things that they have had to work the hardest to attain (e.g., although my partner and I didn't hit it off sexually, we have worked to improve that aspect and we are now closer). More important, there may be an interaction between importance ratings of a characteristic and ITRs about the same characteristic in predicting reactions to negative relationship events (such as disagreements) that concern that dimension. For example, if Jane believes that trust in romantic relationships is very important and she also believes that trust is relatively fixed (e.g., partners either trust each other or they do not), then Jane may be particularly troubled by a disagreement with her partner that concerns or implies a lack of trust. If Jane believes that trust is important but also malleable (e.g., when trust has been violated, it can be restored with effort), then a disagreement about trust may not be as troublesome. Thus, a more specific measure of ITRs may provide a more sophisticated model that takes into account specific aspects of relationships.

It is also possible that ITRs of specific relationship aspects would mediate the association between general ITRs and various relationship phenomena. The literature on attitudes has shown that more specific attitudes are better predictors of specific behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Research on social cognition in close relationships has revealed a similar pattern of findings, albeit with regard to different variables. For example, Fletcher and Fitness (1990) identified ways in which relationship cognitions could serve as both proximal and distal variables in predicting various relationship outcomes. In their study, distal cognition involved the thoughts and feelings that partners experienced during an interaction with each other. Proximal cognition involved the words used in the interactions that reflected thoughts and beliefs (and not emotions). Fletcher and Fitness (1990) found that couples who had more positive assessments of the quality of their relationship (distal) produced more positive cognitions (proximal) during interactions with each other. ITRs may operate in a similar manner such that more global ITRs are related to ITRs about specific aspects of relationships, which in turn predict or moderate relationship phenomena.

Conclusion

ITRs can be a useful framework for conceptualizing how particular beliefs and orientations can influence peoples' goals, inferences, attributions, emotions, and ultimately, behaviors in romantic relationships. In a review of research areas and topics on relationships that need further exploration and development, Aron and Aron (1995) cited (a) an examination of deep, passionate relational experiences; (b) the development of a theory that links cognitive, motivational, and emotional elements to behaviors and outcomes; and (c) a theoretical framework that examines not only how individual phenomena influence relational experiences, but how relational experiences can influence the individual.

Research on ITRs has begun to address passionate relational experiences including feelings of love, ideal-

ization, anger, and coping with infidelity. The ITRs' framework also begins to integrate cognition, motivation, and emotional responses within the relationship. Finally, as mentioned earlier, ITRs may also be subject to situational influences. Thus, ITRs may be somewhat malleable and may change as a function of salient relationship experiences. Although in its incipient stages, the ITRs' framework affords a unique perspective on how particular social cognitions and motivations may operate together to influence how people approach, perceive, and negotiate their romantic lives. Some empirical support already exists, but far more remains to be done.

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