Situations in Close Relationships

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Abstract

A science of close relationships stands to benefit from an understanding of the situations in which interactions between partners take place. In this chapter, we briefly review recent advances in situation research. Within the current decade, several new taxonomies have been put forward that describe how people perceive situations. Functional Interdependence Theory, in particular, posits that people are well-prepared to understand situations in terms of interdependence. New instruments based on Functional Interdependence Theory and other taxonomies for the first time allow researchers to measure in a comprehensive way how people subjectively perceive situations. Coupled with experience sampling methods, which allow the collection of psychological measures in everyday life, these instruments enable researchers to paint a full picture of the interdependent situations people experience in their relationships. We discuss how studying the situations partners experience together in daily life allows researchers to find new answers to questions arising from a) Interdependence Theory, b) Attachment Theory, and c) theorising on relationship maintenance behaviours. Finally, we offer a framework for research on situational interdependence in close relationships.

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Situations in Close Relationships

Imagine Ahmed and Bouke, generally a happy couple—just their musical tastes don't

match: While Ahmed prefers classical music, Bouke is more into electronica. On a particular

evening, our couple feel like relaxing at home. If both were to turn on their music, there

would be a cacophony that would make neither happy, so a quiet apartment could be an

acceptable compromise. Still, Ahmed might be happier if he put on a rendition of a Beethoven

symphony, and Bouke may not be too pained by it. Bouke's favourite Venetian Snares, in

contrast, would quickly drive Ahmed out of the house.

Interdependence Theory has arisen from thinking about these types of situations

partners experience together in close relationships (Kelley et al., 2003; Kelley & Thibaut,

1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Its analysis focuses on how the structure of the situation

determines each partner's outcomes—their tangible and psychological costs and benefits. The

theory identifies four dimensions of interdependence: mutual dependence (the degree to

which partners control each other's outcomes), the basis of interdependence (whether

interdependence arises from social exchange—i.e., each partner controlling the other's

outcomes—or from the need for coordination on joint action), conflict of interests (the degree

to which one partner's gain is the other partner's loss), and power (the degree to which one

partner has more control over their counterpart's outcomes than vice-versa). In addition, two

dimensions index uncertainty: information certainty (the degree to which people are certain or

uncertain about the consequences of their own and the other's actions in the situation) and

future interdependence (the degree to which behaviour in the current situation influences

interdependence in future situations) (Kelley et al., 2003).

In this chapter, we focus on mutual dependence, conflicts of interests, and power.

Analysing our example along these three dimensions tell us that Ahmed and Bouke are

mutually dependent: Their actions (whether to turn on their preferred music) affects their own

and their partner's outcomes. There is also a degree of conflict of interests between them, as

their preferred outcomes (which music is playing) do not align. Finally, we may consider that Bouke has more power in this situation than Ahmed does, as Ahmed's well-being depends on more on Bouke's behaviour (he'd be driven out of the house by Bouke's favourite music) than Bouke's well-being depends on Ahmed's (Bouke could live with Ahmed's choice of music, even if it's not his favourite). Yet, other situations may involve greater independence, more corresponding interests, or a different balance of power.

Interdependence Theory is uniquely positioned to answer the call to ground the science of relationships on an analysis of situations (Reis, 2008). This call suggests that even though each partner may have their own interpretation of a situation, their construal is grounded in objective features of the situation and organised along universal (or at least widely shared) dimensions. Over the last decade, situation research has made major advances in conceptualising what a situation is, clearly distinguishing objective properties from the mental representation of situation characteristics (Rauthmann, Sherman, & Funder, 2015), and focusing its taxonomic efforts on the latter. Several new taxonomies and accompanying measures of both general and specifically social situation characteristics are now available (general: CAPTIONs, Parrigon, Woo, Tay, & Wang, 2017; DIAMONDS, Rauthmann et al., 2014; social: FIT/SIS, Balliet, Tybur, & van Lange, 2017; Gerpott, Balliet, Columbus, Molho, & de Vries, 2017; SAAP, Brown, Neel, & Sherman, 2015), and advances in experience sampling methodology make it possible to accurately measure the psychological experience of situations in daily life (for methodological introductions, see Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013; Mehl & Conner, 2013).

Most interesting to relationship researchers working in the tradition of Interdependence Theory, Functional Interdependence Theory proposes that people are able to assess their situational interdependence along the dimensions proposed by interdependence theorists (Balliet et al., 2017): Mutual dependence, coordination vs social exchange, conflict of interests, and power. A new measure—the Situational Interdependence Scale—also makes it

possible to measure these perceptions (SIS, Gerpott et al., 2018).[1] Coupled with intensively

longitudinal methods that sample situations from the daily lives of couples, these new theories

and measures promise further insights into interdependence in close relationships.

In the following, we first present an overview of recent developments in situation

research, introducing new taxonomies and measures that can be useful to relationship

researchers. We specifically discuss Functional Interdependence Theory (Balliet et al., 2017)

and the Situational Interdependence Scale (Gerpott et al., 2018), and highlight a first

application in the field of relationship research (Columbus, Molho, Righetti, & Balliet, in

press). Subsequently, we discuss potential applications of measuring situational

interdependence in daily life on questions related to Interdependence Theory, Attachment

Theory, and relationship maintenance behaviours such as responsiveness, sacrifice, and

forgiveness. We conclude by providing a broad framework for asking questions about

situational interdependence in the context of close relationships.

Recent Advances in Situation Research

Situation research has experienced a revival in recent years. This has been part a

response to sustained calls to provide a basis for the oft-repeated claim of "the power of the

situation" (Holmes, 2002; Reis, 2008), part an attempt to substantiate accounts of personality

rooted in cross-situational stability (Funder, 2001; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The call for

innovation in situation research has been answered by the development of new frameworks

for studying psychological properties of situations (Balliet et al., 2017; Horstmann & Ziegler,

2016; Rauthmann et al., 2015), new measures to assess how people think about situations

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[1] The SIS measures perceptions of mutual dependence, conflict of interests, and power, as well as future interdependence and information certainty, as indicated in the third section of Table 1. The SIS omits social exchange versus coordination given the lack of evidence that people can distinguish situations along this dimension (Gerpott et al., 2017).

(Horstmann, Rauthmann, & Sherman, 2018; Molho & Balliet, 2017), and new data collection methods to access situations in daily life.

Frameworks for Studying Situation Perception

New frameworks have brought conceptual clarity to ontological questions in the study of situations. A prominent account (Rauthmann et al., 2015) distinguishes between situation cues, situation characteristics, and classes of situations as three distinct subjects of study. The distinction between cues—objective properties of the physical or social situation—and characteristics—the psychological situation constructed by the subject from external and internal inputs—distinguishes the major efforts at a situation taxonomy, and has a long history in psychological theorising. For example, H. A. Murray (1938) distinguished between 'alpha press'—the objective account of an environment's impact on a person's behaviour—and 'beta press'—the influence of the subject's own interpretation of the environment. Later accounts arising in the wake of the person-situation debate of the 1970s similarly distinguished between physically observable and subjective features of situations (Block & Block, 1981; Saucier, Bel-Bahar, & Fernandez, 2007).

Much attention has been paid to objective features of situations that Rauthmann et al. (2015) refer to as "cues." These features correspond to the alpha press of Murray's theory: the physical and social aspects of a situation that could be recorded by an outside observer. More recent work has disentangled situation cues into answers to five simple 'W-questions': Who is with you in the situation? Which objects are present? What is happening? Where are you? When is it happening? (Pervin, 1978). In other words, situation cues can be classed into a) persons and relationships; b) objects; c) events and activities; d) locations; and e) time. Despite the intuitive appeal of this classification, however, little progress has been made towards a useful taxonomy of objective situation cues (Horstmann et al., 2018; Saucier et al., 2007).

Rather than to focus on cues, a recent wave of situation taxonomies has instead centred on psychological situation characteristics (Brown et al., 2015; Gerpott et al., 2018; Parrigon et al., 2017; Rauthmann et al., 2014). Corresponding to Murray's beta press, these are the psychologically relevant meanings of cues or abstract mental representations of psychologically meaningful variables constructed from internal and external inputs (Balliet et al., 2017; Rauthmann et al., 2015). Rauthmann et al. (2015) classify these inputs into person factors such as traits, habits, knowledge, the person's social roles, and affective or motivational states on one hand, and situation factors corresponding to the above-mentioned W-questions on the other hand. Person factors thus include both states and traits of the person (cf. Gerpott et al., 2018). In parallel, we may also distinguish more fleeting, state-like aspects of the situation and more stable (or trait-like) aspects of an environment (Asendorpf, 2015). Perennial issues in a relationship, for example, may be thought of as situation "traits" in this way. In a given situation, all of these aspects then form the input for psychological situation characteristics.

Functional Interdependence Theory. Functional Interdependence Theory (FIT) is a theoretical account integrating Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003) with principles of evolutionary psychology to explain why and how people are able to make sense of outcome interdependence in social situations (Balliet et al., 2017). From Interdependence Theory, it takes the major dimensions of interdependence and the idea that behaviour is a consequence of the objective features of interdependence (i.e., the "structure" of a situation), together with each person's goals and expectations (Holmes, 2002). From evolutionary psychology, FIT takes a computational model of the mind, in which situation characteristics are the result of computations from cues, and can in turn be fed into other computations and behaviour.

Our human ancestors must have experienced a wide variety of interdependent situations in their dealings with others, and so FIT proposes that the human mind is adapted to

navigating interdependent situations. This means that people are attentive to cues of interdependence in their environment, and condition their behaviour on their perceptions of interdependence. Indeed, people are attentive to cues of interdependence, such as others' eye gaze (Emery, 2000), nonverbal behaviour (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005), and emotional expressions (e.g. Berdahl & Martorana, 2006).

Recent research shows that more comprehensively, people respond to cues of interdependence along the multiple dimensions proposed by Interdependence Theory in both their perceptions and behaviour (Gerpott et al., 2018). For example, people infer conflict of interests from a person's crossed arms (Gerpott et al., 2018), and use their counterpart's emotional expressions to tell how much power they hold in a negotiation (Columbus & Balliet, n.d.; Pietroni, van Kleef, de Dreu, & Pagliaro, 2008; Pietroni, van Kleef, Rubaltelli, & Rumiati, 2009). This suggests that people are able to make use of cues in their social environment to estimate their interdependence with others in specific situations.

According to FIT, information about interdependence is organised in the form of internal regulatory variables (Tooby, Cosmides, Sell, Lieberman, & Sznycer, 2008). These variables integrate information from multiple sources, which may have the form of cues in the (social) environment—such as the presence and behaviour of other people, their status, or the subject's relationship to them—but also other internal regulatory variables, such as a kinship index (Lieberman, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2007). In turn, these indices of interdependence can feed into other internal regulatory variables but also, and perhaps more importantly, impact behaviour. Going back to our initial example, Ahmed may consider cues of Bouke's current mood to determine how much their musical wishes are in conflict in this situation. Concluding that Bouke seems upbeat, Ahmed may infer that his partner won't mind some Beethoven too much—their conflict of interests is limited. This perception of conflict then influences his decision to turn on the Symphony No. 3. As in this example, the internal regulatory variables proposed by FIT thus provide the link between the cues in a given situation an individual

encounters and posited psychological and behavioural consequences of situational interdependence. This account can be tested and compared with other models via recent developments in situation taxonomies and the measurement of psychological characteristics of situations.

New Taxonomies and Measures

In recent years, a number of new taxonomies have been developed to classify the psychological characteristics of situations (for a historical overview, see Horstmann et al., 2018). In contrast to previous efforts in this direction, these taxonomies are also accompanied by validated measurement scales. For the first time, this makes it feasible for researchers to study the psychological representation of situations in close relationships using validated measures. New taxonomies and measures include the Situational Eight DIAMONDS (Rauthmann et al., 2014), CAPTIONS (Parrigon et al., 2017), and the Situational Interdependence Scale (SIS, Gerpott et al., 2018). Other notable developments are the Situational Affordances for Adaptive Problems measure (SAAP, Brown et al., 2015) and the Big Five Inventory of Occupational Situations (Ziegler, 2014).

These taxonomies have been developed in different ways and are motivated by different applications. Both CAPTIONS and Situation 5 were developed using a lexical approach, by sampling adjectives that apply to situations—in analogy to the development of the Big 5 and HEXACO personality factor models (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Goldberg, 1982; John, Angleitner, & Ostendorf, 1988). DIAMONDS was developed by adaptation of a personality measure (the California Adult Q-sort) to describe situations (Rauthmann et al., 2014; Wagerman & Funder, 2009). In contrast, both SIS and SAAP were developed using a theory-driven approach, informed by evolutionary theory and, in the case of the SIS, directly based on dimensions of situations posited in Interdependence Theory (Balliet et al., 2017; Gerpott et al., 2018; Kelley et al., 2003; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The SIS is also unique in being based on a theoretical account of how people think about interdependence in situation (Balliet et al., 2017).

Different taxonomies can be applied to different sets of situations. CAPTIONS and DIAMONDS can be used to describe all situations, whereas SIS and SAAP are designed to describe situations involving social interactions. In contrast to these rather general scales, the Situation 5 was specifically designed to be used in an occupational context. These differences in focus suggest that each taxonomy and measure may be appropriate for use in specific contexts. Moreover, integration may not result in the development of a single, overarching taxonomy, but rather in a nomological network describing the interrelations between factors in the different taxonomies (Horstmann et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that there is significant overlap in the dimensions of DIAMONDS and CAPTIONS (Horstmann et al., 2018; Rauthmann & Sherman, 2017).

In contrast, the DIAMONDS and CAPTIONS dimensions do not map on the dimensions of interdependence assessed by the SIS. Indeed, correlations between DIAMONDS and SIS ratings of situations tend to be low (Gerpott et al., 2018). The SIS dimension of Conflict of Interests shows a mid-sized correlation with the DIAMONDS dimensions of Adversity and (negatively) pOsitivity. Adversity is also negatively associated with the SIS dimension of Information Certainty (Gerpott et al., 2018). Some SIS dimensions, however, such as Mutual Dependence and Power, display little, if any, correlation with the DIAMONDS dimensions (Gerpott et al., 2018). Similarly, DIAMONDS dimensions such as Intellect and Mating are not associated with ratings on the SIS (Gerpott et al., 2018). This indicates that broad taxonomies of everyday situations, such as DIAMONDS and CAPTIONS, may measure different aspects of situations than more narrowly focused taxonomies such as the SIS.

How should a researcher choose a taxonomy of situations and the corresponding measure? Different applications may call for different uses.[2] Scales such as DIAMONDS and CAPTIONS are applicable to a broad range of everyday situations, many of which may not involve social interactions. Scales that are designed to measure interdependence (SIS) or affordances in social interactions (SAAP) may not be useable in this case. Researchers interested in relationships, however, may appreciate the theoretical grounding of the SIS in Interdependence Theory and its precision in analysing social interactions. The dimensions of the SIS find their equivalence in constructs studied by relationship researchers, such as mutual dependence, conflict, or power, enabling an interested researcher to draw on rich theory in developing hypotheses about situational influences.

Studying Situations using Experiments and in Daily Life

The situations people experience throughout their daily lives can vary tremendously. A researcher studying situations will thus often be interested in intra-personal variation or consistency in motivation, cognition, and behaviour across various situations. Such questions can be answered by exposing participants to different situations in the laboratory (e.g., Leikas, Lönnqvist, & Verkasalo, 2012). Yet, it may not always be clear what properties of the experimental situation are efficacious psychologically. Including scales that measure situation perception could thus help elucidate how manipulations influence behaviour (e.g., Columbus, Gerpott, & Münich, 2020).

However, many relationship researchers may move beyond a lab setting to examine interactions in daily life. They may be interested in the structure of everyday experience and intra-personal variation across naturally occurring situations (i.e., an idiographic approach

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[2] The use of a specific scale may also be motivated by requirements of conciseness and the availability of translations. However, short versions exist of the DIAMONDS (eight items, one per dimension, see Rauthmann & Sherman, 2016), CAPTIONS (seven and 14 items, one or two per dimension), and SIS (ten items, two per dimension). DIAMONDS and SIS have also been translated into several different languages. For translations of the SIS, see https://amsterdamcooperationlab.com/sis/.

modelling each individual's behavior; Conner, Tennen, Fleeson, & Feldman Barrett, 2009), or in predicting future situations from past situations. New methods are making it increasingly feasible to collect data on situations in everyday life in or close to the situation. Although diary and experience sampling methods have a long history in psychological research, they have long been difficult and expensive to administer. The rise of smartphones and the mobile web, however, makes it easy to administer experience sampling surveys at comparably low cost, and allow for assessment of behaviour shortly after it occurs.

Ambulatory assessment methods can be broadly distinguished into diary and experience sampling studies. Diary studies involve a single, daily survey, often administered at the end of the day similar to a classic diary. These surveys can be longer, taking up to ten minutes every day, and may even involve simple implicit measures (e.g., an IAT) or a small experimental component. Diary studies, being less taxing on participants than experience sampling, may also run longer, up to several weeks at a time.

Experience sampling, in contrast, involves several short surveys over the course of a day. A key distinction is between variable time-based, fixed time-based, and event-based sampling of situations (Conner et al., 2009). Variable time-based sampling involves surveys administered at (semi-) random times throughout the day. It reduces issues of memory bias and is well-suited for studying ongoing phenomena, such as situations or mood. Because situations are sampled randomly this way, this is the most suitable approach for studying the patterns of situations in everyday life. Fixed time-based sampling involves surveys administered on a predictable schedule. It may pose a lighter load on participants, but causes greater concerns of memory bias and involves non-random sampling of situations. Consequently, fixed time-based sampling may omit situations that do not occur around the specific time of assessment. However, for relationship researchers, it may help increase the number of surveys to which both partners reply. Finally, event-sampling involves reports initiated usually by the participant every time a given event occurs. This is the best approach

for studying events that have a low frequency or very specific characteristics that make them unique, either of which might be missed in time-based sampling. For example, Interdependence Theory highlights 'diagnostic situations' such as (severe) conflicts of interest, and researchers interested in these situations specifically may prefer event-based sampling.

Studying Naturally Occurring Situations in Close Relationships

Studying situations in close relationships poses particular challenges. Oftentimes, a researcher may be interested in obtaining reports from both partners regarding the same situations. Different approaches may yield different rates of success with this aim, but also come with different biases.

A way to make sure partners report on the same situation is to instruct them to coordinate before making their report ('joint recall'). This may yield rates of alignment above 90%. However, it could also mean that partners discuss the situation before completing measures and influence each other's perception of the situation, or that they selectively choose to report particular types of situations (e.g., omitting high conflict situations). Providing partners with an anchoring time point (e.g., "the first situation after 10:00 today") may help limit the problem of selection, but some problems are likely to remain, such as outsized influence of a more powerful partner on selecting the situation to report. Moreover, asking partners to coordinate their reports is only feasible for diary studies or designs that do not involve multiple assessments throughout the day.
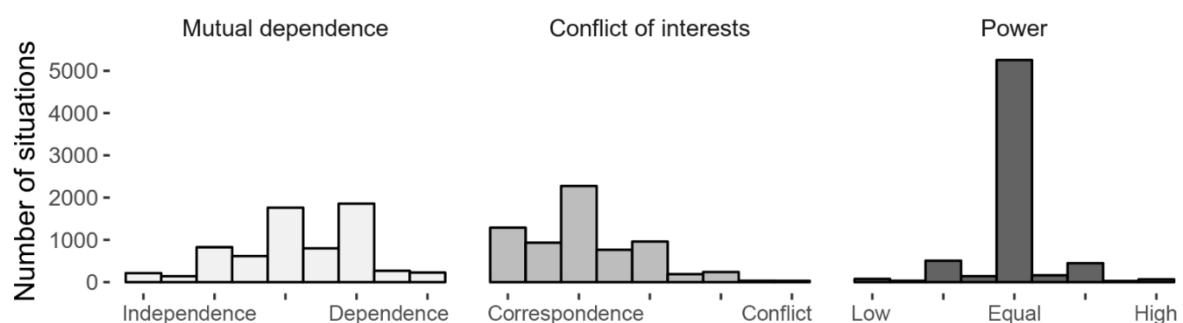
Another approach is to ask partners to report situations individually, but contact them at the same (variable) time ('individual recall'). Partners can then be asked to report about the last situation they experienced with each other. This approach, however, can reduce the amount of available data for at least two reasons. First, there could be many instances in which partners did not experience a dyadic interaction since the previous signal. Second, even if they report on a situation, partners may report on different situations, but participants' own

indication of the timing of a situation is often too unreliable to match their reports. It is then important to ask participants to briefly describe the situation and code afterwards whether they reported on the same situation. This may mean a much lower response rate than achieved with joint recall, but may often be the only feasible option when using experience sampling.[3]

Situations in Close Relationships: The Interdependence in Daily Life-Couples Study

In a first application of the Situational Interdependence Scale to relationship research, we have conducted an experience sampling study on a diverse sample of 139 Dutch couples. After an intake session, during which we assessed various personality and attitude measures as well as relationship-relevant constructs, the couples participated in a week-long experience sampling phase. During this phase, they were prompted simultaneously to complete seven short surveys a day. The surveys asked each participant to report the last situation they had experienced with their partner by answering four W-questions (when? where? with whom? what did you do, and what happened?) and to rate the situation on the 10-item short form of the SIS, alongside some other situational measures. More details of the Interdependence in Daily Life Study are described in Columbus et al. (n.d.).

Figure 1. Distributions of perceived mutual dependence, conflict of interests, and power in interactions between romantic partners (n = 278, k = 6,766 situations).

First results reported in Columbus et al. (in press) show significant agreement between partners on their perception of the situation on the SIS, attesting to the reliability of the measure. Interestingly, greater agreement on the structure of situations predicted greater relationship satisfaction (Rentzsch, Gerlach, Columbus, & Balliet, n.d.). Couples mostly experienced situations involving corresponding interests and equal power, with significant spread in mutual dependence (see Figure 1). Moreover, one partner's perception of the couple's interdependence in a given situation predicted the other partner's rating of their cooperation in the situation. In particular, mutual dependence was associated with increased cooperation, and conflict of interests with decreased cooperation; power did not show a relationship with behaviour. These initial results highlight the variety of interdependent situations couples experience, but also how the experience and perception of interdependence relates to relationship-relevant emotions, cognitions, and behaviours. Thus, these findings illustrate how situational measures of interdependence in daily life can answer new questions in relationship research. Below, we discuss potential avenues for research in the traditions of Interdependence Theory and Attachment Theory, and on relationship maintenance behaviours such as responsiveness, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Applications in Relationship Research

Theoretical Perspectives

      Interdependence Theory and the Investment Model. Researchers working in the tradition of Interdependence Theory (Kelley et al., 2003; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and its descendants, including the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult, Agnew, & Arriaga, 2012; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), explicitly study the experience of interdependent situations in close relationships (Reis & Arriaga, 2014; Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). Their work highlights that situational, but also personal and relationship characteristics shape situation perceptions (Arriaga, 2013; L. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010;

Simpson, Campbell, & Weisberg, 2006). Interdependence theory, in particular, emphasises the transformation of situations in light of individuals' goals. It posits that individuals may consider the long-term consequences of their actions, react to norms and rules, or account for their partner's outcomes—all of which can transform the interdependence structure of a situation as they perceive it (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). For example, a situation may appear less conflictful in light of future interactions involving opportunities for mutual gain. The Investment Model further distinguishes dependence—"the descriptive, structural state of a relationship"—from commitment—"the psychological experience of that state" (Le & Agnew, 2003, p. 38) which involves feelings of attachment and the intent to sustain the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1998; Rusbult et al., 2012).

Research using both manipulated and self-reported interdependent situations shows the effect of different dimensions of interdependence on individual and relationship outcomes. For example, both high and low power have been linked to negative affect, reduced investments and commitment, and lower relationship satisfaction (high power: Lennon, Stewart, & Ledermann, 2013; Righetti et al., 2015; low power: S. L. Murray, Holmes, & Pinkus, 2010; Simpson, Farrell, Oriña, & Rothman, 2015). Commitment—strongly related to the experience of dependence—is consistently linked to higher relationship satisfaction and relationship persistence (Le & Agnew, 2003; Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010). Conflict of interests is linked to negative affect and behaviours (Columbus et al., in press; Durante, Eastwick, Finkel, Gangestad, & Simpson, 2016; Righetti, Gere, Hofmann, Visserman, & Van Lange, 2016; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). Even coordination can be challenging to achieve in close relationships (Finkel et al., 2006). The effects of interdependent situations also carry over to future interactions, affecting whether people select to enter dependent situations with their partner (Kelley et al., 2003; Reis & Arriaga, 2014). For example, the experience of dependence and conflict may, under some circumstances,

result in the escalation of commitment (Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012; S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2009).

The Investment Model builds on the analysis of dyadic situations in Interdependence Theory. However, the model focuses on how three bases of dependence in a relationship (investment size, relationship satisfaction, and quality of alternatives) relate to the subjective experience of commitment (Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult et al., 2012, 1998). This analysis does not account for how interdependence may vary from situation to situation within a relationship. Incidentally, research in this tradition has also largely neglected the multidimensional nature of interdependence. A focus on situational interdependence can inform research on the Investment Model in at least two ways.

First, researchers may ask how the bases of dependence give rise to daily experiences of mutual dependence, conflict of interests, or power. For example, individuals who perceive their alternatives to be of higher quality than their partner does may hold more power than their partner in daily interactions. In turn, these situational experiences may translate into a sense of (lower) commitment (cf. Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992). It has been theorised that the latter effect of interdependent situations on commitment and relationship perseverance is mediated by affective responses (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). For example, conflicts of interests may give rise to both anger and disgust (e.g., Gerpott et al., 2018). Yet, while anger often dissipates quickly, disgust may have a more long-lasting impact on relationship outcomes (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011).

Second, the experience of interdependent situations may also feed back to reshape the bases of dependence. For example, recurrently encountering conflicts of interests with one's partner may decrease relationship satisfaction, while deciding to sacrifice in such situations may increase the investment size (Righetti et al., 2016; Rusbult et al., 1998). Thus, the experience of interdependent situations may both affect and be affected by the bases of dependence postulated by the Investment Model.

Several models have sprung from interdependence theory to explain how people navigate situations involving conflict and dependence. S. L. Murray and Holmes (2009) have proposed a motivation-management theory that posits that situational conflict of interests interacts with interpersonal trust to give each partner a sense of risk, which in turn affects the pursuit of connect and self-protect goals (Cavallo, Murray, & Holmes, 2014; S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2015). One implication is that chronic interpersonal trust affects perceptions of risk and goal pursuit more strongly in situations that are low in information certainty (S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2009, 2015). Connect goals lead individuals to escalate their dependence on their partner, and to justify their commitment (S. L. Murray et al., 2009b). Self-protect goals, in contrast, lead them to withhold commitment, and escalate their partner's dependence. Each partner's responsiveness is then thought to inform updated trust (S. L. Murray et al., 2009a).

What emerges is a sophisticated account of how individual differences (e.g., self-esteem, Gomillion & Murray, 2014) and relationship history (via trust, S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2009; S. L. Murray, Holmes, Griffin, & Derrick, 2015) shape expectations about one's partner (Holmes, 2002) and the pursuit of interpersonal goals. One hypothesis is that these factors determine whether an individual will accommodate their partner in a high-conflict situation (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Another is that the pursuit of connect and self-protect goals should influence the degree of dependence they experience in subsequent situations, in that having connect goals will induce people to seek and encounter situations high in dependence, while having self-protection goals will induce people to seek situations low in dependence.

Attachment Theory. Attachment theory has emerged from a developmental perspective to encompass relationship processes throughout the lifespan (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and recent theorising and empirical research increasingly probes intrapersonal dynamics within relationships (Arriaga, Kumashiro, Simpson, & Overall,

2017; Girme et al., 2018). Attachment styles are an important dimension of individual differences that determine the situation people seek out and how people respond to interdependent situations in the short and long term. They predict how comfortable individuals are with situations containing interdependence dilemmas in which they are forced to decide whether to escalate or reduce their dependence on an attachment figure (Bartz & Lydon, 2006). For example, the individual may be faced with the opportunity to express their romantic interest in the other. Such a situation is high in future interdependence (i.e., the individual's actions determine the degree and form or future interdependence with the other), but also in information uncertainty (i.e., the individual does not know whether the romantic interest is mutual). Individuals high in anxious attachment may be uncomfortable with such situations and seek to avoid them (Bartz & Lydon, 2006).

Individuals high in anxious attachment also perceive more frequent and severe conflict situations (Simpson et al., 2006), and respond more negatively to these situations, experiencing greater hurt and more negative emotions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Schoebi & Randall, 2015; Simpson et al., 2006; Simpson et al., 1996). Attachment style also influences negative behaviours towards partners in response to dependence (L. Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001) and accommodation in the face of conflict (Gaines et al., 1997). Recent work on the intrapersonal dynamics of adult attachment has also emphasised the context-dependent activation of the attachment system. This work suggests that the attachment system is particularly responsive to threatening situations, becoming activated when security needs are not met (L. Campbell & Marshall, 2011).

Attachment researchers have explored the relationship of trait-like adult attachment with the perceptions, selection, and response to interdependent situations. However, much of this work has focused on individual dimensions—in particular conflict—and outside a more comprehensive, multidimensional framework of interdependence. On the other hand, interdependence theorists have paid limited attention to individual differences in the

perception and selection of situations. Attachment theory makes direct predictions about the perception and selection of interdependent situations. In particular, anxious attachment should predict both increased perceptions of conflict of interests (Simpson et al., 2006) and information uncertainty. Moreover, individuals high in anxious attachment might be expected to select situations involving high mutual dependence. In contrast, avoidant attachment may be associated with heightened perception of mutual dependence and avoidance of such situations. A key distinction between insecure attachment styles may be the avoidance (in avoidant individuals) versus selection (in anxious individuals) of situations in which the individual has low power relative to their partner.

Recent work has started to explore the dynamic nature of adult attachment and in particular the activation of the attachment system by situations within a relationship (Arriaga et al., 2017; L. Campbell & Marshall, 2011). Specifically, Arriaga et al. (2017) have proposed an attachment security enhancement model (ASEM), which posits that insecurity-triggering situations evoke attachment processes. Borrowing the concept of "diagnostic situations" from interdependence theory, ASEM posits that certain situations trigger insecurity. These are situations involving conflicts of interest, power asymmetries, or low information certainty. Insecurity, in turn, can activate a need for greater interdependence, leading to anxious thoughts and feeling, or a need for greater independence, leading to avoidant thoughts and feelings. Moreover, the repeated experience of insecurity reinforces insecure expectations— i.e., negative or defensive models of the self and ambiguous or negative models of others.

This account of within-person attachment processes explicitly links short-term motivations (need for interdependence or independence) to the experience of interdependent situations. Moreover, it highlights that intrapersonal attachment processes may affect situation selection both in the short term (as motivations are enacted) and in the long term (as working models are revised, shaping expectations about the self and others in interdependent

situations). This directly calls for the study of attachment processes grounded in the experience of situational interdependence.

Relationship maintenance behaviours. To maintain a relationship, partners need to engage in relationship maintenance behaviours, such as being responsive, sacrificing for their partner, and forgiving slights and transgressions. Such behaviours both occur in and shape the interdependent situations partners experience together. Perceived partner responsiveness (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004) encompasses a number of constructs, such as reflected appraisal, emotional rapport, and responsiveness to needs. It is "the process by which individuals come to believe that relationship partners both attend to and react supportively to central, core defining features of the self" (ibid., p. 203).

What is perceived as responsive may depend on the structure of the situation, which affords the expression of some motives but not others (de Vries, Tybur, Pollet, & van Vugt, 2016). Situations in which responsive behaviour comes with a cost (i.e., which involve a conflict of interest) may especially afford the expression of responsiveness. Indeed, the effect of support and conflict behaviours depends on the nature of the situation and on the personalities of the partners, especially their attachment styles (Overall & Simpson, 2015; Overall, Girme, & Simpson, 2016; Visserman, Righetti, Impett, Keltner, & van Lange, 2018). In particular, a tendency to respond to one's own dependence with responsive behaviour predicts better relationship outcomes, but only in situations where one experiences high dependence (Overall & Sibley, 2008). However, situational factors have so far received less attention than person factors. This points towards further avenues for research exploring the context-dependence of responsive behaviour.

Research into the antecedents and consequences of sacrifice has largely sprung from an interdependence tradition. Indeed, this research area is directly focused on the experience of mixed-motive situations, in which individuals can forego personal gain to benefit their partner (Righetti & Impett, 2017). Variations in the degree of conflict of interests may further affect

whether people sacrifice, and how this is perceived by their partner. In particular, sacrifice may be less likely to occur the higher the costs are. However, partners may in turn experience greater gratitude in response to sacrifices when they acknowledge the severity of the conflict of interests. Moreover, people may be more likely to sacrifice when they perceive greater future interdependence with their partner, in hope of reciprocation in the future. Finally, individuals high in commitment and trust are more likely to sacrifice for their partner (Etcheverry & Le, 2005; Powell & van Vugt, 2003; Shallcross & Simpson, 2012; van Lange et al., 1997), whereas those high in power are less willing to do so (Righetti et al., 2015). However, these predictors were, so far, only considered as traits. Power, but also mutual dependence, do however fluctuate from situation to situation (Columbus et al., in press), giving rise to the question whether situational factors affect the willingness to sacrifice in similar, or perhaps rather different ways than at the trait level.

When individuals fail to accommodate their partners' needs, they may yet be forgiven— their partner's negative feeling towards them do not have to be long-lasting. At times, partners may hurt each other or transgress relationship's norms. Forgiveness is then necessary to re-establish a positive relationship. A recent meta-analysis showed forgiveness to be promoted by apology and state empathy, though intent and anger made it less likely (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). While state variables thus proved more important in predicting forgiveness than victim dispositions, few studies have probed the effects of situation characteristics. In one study, individuals who experienced more power were more likely to forgive, an effect further magnified in highly committed relationships (Karremans & Smith, 2010). However, beyond power, other features of interdependence may also affect willingness to forgive, such as the degree of conflict of interest and future interdependence. An individual's motivation to forgive a transgression may depend on their perception of the choices their partner faced (e.g., harm may be more easily pardoned if avoiding it would have required a significant sacrifice). In addition, there may be a forward-looking motivation to forgive in order to avoid future

conflict. Moreover, forgiveness itself may have effects on partners' willingness to enter mutually dependent or conflictual situations, and their behaviour in such situation. For example, one study showed that forgiveness promoted later closeness and commitment (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006).

A Structure for Research on Situations in Relationships

Durante et al. (2016) have recently proposed that relationship research relies on (implicit) assumptions that partners, overall, experience largely corresponding interests. They also propose that this distinguishes the tradition of relationship research from evolutionary perspectives, which more strongly emphasise conflicts of interest. Although Durante et al. (2016) largely conceptualise interdependence and conflict of interests at the relationship level, their work nevertheless raises the question—at the purely descriptive level—of the pattern of interdependence that partners experience in a relationship.

First evidence by Columbus et al. (in press) reveals that it is not merely an assumption that couples experience largely corresponding interests. Couples predominantly reported situations involving corresponding interests and equal power, and a wide spread of mutual dependence. Starting from these purely descriptive results, future research may address a series of research questionson the experience of situational interdependence in couples. One set of questions relates to person-situation transactions: First, are there individual differences in the perception of situations? Second, when and how do individuals and couples select, evoke, or manipulate situations (Buss, 1987, 2009)? A second set of questions relate to the effects of situations and person-situation interactions: First, do different situations give rise to different behaviour? Second, do individuals and couples differ in their response to particular situations, and if so, what are the mechanisms by which they may regulate their reactions?

Person-situation transactions encompass the ways individual differences—in particular, personality—affect the perception, selection, evocation, and manipulation of situations. We assume that individuals arrive at a particular mental representation of a situation—in the form

of situation characteristics—by a process of construal that relies of cues in the social environment as well as person factors (Rauthmann et al., 2015). Individuals differ in the way they access and weight cues, leading them to perceive situations differently. Such variation may reflect attachment styles: for example, individuals high in anxious attachment perceive more frequent and more severe conflicts of interests (Simpson et al., 2006). Individuals also select situations they enter or avoid, evoke situations by (unintentionally) eliciting reactions from others, and manipulate situations by (intentionally) altering them (Buss, 1987, 2009). Recent work inspired by interdependence and attachment theories has proposed ways in which experiences of interdependence may have short- and long-term effects on the type of situations people experience, in part because of the ways they regulate risk, commitment, and attachment (Arriaga et al., 2017; S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2009).

Interdependent situations have direct relationship-relevant outcomes, including affective and behavioural responses. Columbus et al. (in press) revealed that the interdependence structure of situations directly predicts the degree of prosocial behaviour towards the partner. However, interdependent situations also cause affective responses (Righetti et al., 2016; Gerpott et al., 2018), and may trigger the motivation-management system (S. L. Murray & Holmes, 2009) and attachment processes (Arriaga et al., 2017) proposed by recent theories.

Significant progress has also been made in understanding the importance of dyadic effects, highlighting in particular the importance of responsiveness to partners' needs (Reis & Gable, 2015; Reis et al., 2004). Yet, responses to interdependent situations should be expected to differ between individual and between couples. For example, individuals high in anxious attachment experience more hurt as a consequence of conflicts of interests (L. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005). At the level of couples, partners may also develop patterns of responses that play out over time (Rusbult & van Lange, 2003). Further research into such person- and couple-situation interactions is clearly promising.

Conclusion

Research in the tradition of Interdependence Theory is research rooted in an appreciation of the importance of situations (Holmes, 2002; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003; Reis, 2008). New frameworks and measures, such as Functional Interdependence Theory (Balliet et al., 2017) and the Situational Interdependence Scale (Gerpott et al., 2018), open new research trajectories by allowing the assessment of interdependent situations in daily life. Embarking on these trajectories can lead to a richer understanding of how couples select, shape, and navigate their interdependent relationships.

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Table 1: Dimensions, descriptions, and sample items of the SIS, DIAMONDS, and CAPTIONs taxonomies and scales.

Dimensions	Description	Sample Items (Source Scale)
CAPTIONs		**28-item CAPTIONs-SF** (Parrigon et al., 2017)
Complexity	The extent to which the situation involves emotional or ethical complexity, or requires learning and deep thought.	analytical, scholarly
Adversity	The extent to which the situation is difficult and depleting and involves exertion of physical or mental resources.	stressful, tiresome
Positive Valence	The extent to which the situation involves intimacy, personal warmth, or general positivity.	cherished, heartwarming
Typicality	The extent to which the situation is common and straightforward in nature, as opposed to involving novelty and ambiguity.	regular, standard
Importance	The extent to which the situation is important for attaining one's goals.	useful, productive
Hum*o*r	The extent "to which the situation is humorous or lighthearted" (Parrigon et al., 2017, p. 656).	wacky, goofy
Negative Valence	The extent to which the situation is sinister or involves malice.	repulsive, malicious
DIAMONDS		**S8-I** (Rauthmann & Sherman, 2016)
Duty	The extent to which work or a task needs to be done.	Work has to be done.
Intellect	The extent to which the situation requires intellectual engagement or poses cognitive demands.	Deep thinking is required.
Adversity	The extent to which someone is threatened or that problems exist in the situation.	Somebody is being threatened, accused, or criticized.
Mating	The extent to which a situation is "conducive to sex, love, and romance" (Rauthmann et al., 2014, p. 708).	Potential romantic partners are present.
pOsitivity	The extent to which the situation is pleasant.	The situation is pleasant.
Negativity	The extent to which the situation may give rise to negative feelings.	The situation contains negative feelings (e.g., stress, anxiety, guilt, etc.).

Deception	The extent to which there is mistrust, lying, or hostility in the situation.	Somebody is being deceived.
Sociality	The extent to which social interaction occurs and is important, especially if it is pleasant.	Social interactions are possible or required.

Situational Interdependence Scale		**10-item SIS-short** (Gerpott et al., 2018)
Mutual Dependence	The extent to which each person's outcomes depend on the other person's behaviour.	What each of us does in this situation affects the other.
Conflict of Interests	The extent of conflict of interests—the degree to which one person's outcomes negatively affect the other person's outcomes.	Our preferred outcomes in this situation are conflicting.
Power	The asymmetry of dependence—the extent to which one person depends more on the other than vice-versa.	Who do you feel had more power to determine their own outcome in this situation?*
Future Interdependence	The extent to which behaviour in the current situation affects the nature of future interactions.	How we behave now will have consequences for future outcomes.
Information Certainty	The extent to which each person knows how their own and the other person's actions affect each other's outcomes.	We both know what the other wants.

Note: * indicates items answered on a Likert scale *1 = Completely the other, 3 = Both equally, 5 = Completely Myself.* All other items are answered on a standard Likert-type response scale (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree). See source papers for detailed instructions.