

# The Relational Self: An Interpersonal Social–Cognitive Theory

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The authors propose an interpersonal social–cognitive theory of the self and personality, the relational self, in which knowledge about the self is linked with knowledge about significant others, and each linkage embodies a self–other relationship. Mental representations of significant others are activated and used in interpersonal encounters in the social–cognitive phenomenon of transference (S. M. Andersen & N. S. Glassman, 1996), and this evokes the relational self. Variability in relational selves depends on interpersonal contextual cues, whereas stability derives from the chronic accessibility of significant–other representations. Relational selves function in if–then terms (W. Mischel & Y. Shoda, 1995), in which ifs are situations triggering transference, and thens are relational selves. An individual’s repertoire of relational selves is a source of interpersonal patterns involving affect, motivation, self-evaluation, and self-regulation.

The nature of the self has long perplexed and intrigued scholars across a broad spectrum of academic disciplines. In psychology alone, well over a century of inquiry has translated into a virtual explosion of theory and research in recent decades, especially in social psychology, all aiming to chart the contours of the self. Sharing this aim, we propose an interpersonal social–cognitive theory of the self that draws on theory and research in social cognition, personality psychology, and clinical psychology. Our central argument is that the self is relational—or even entangled—with significant others and that this has implications for self-definition, self-evaluation, self-regulation, and, most broadly, for personality functioning, expressed in relation to others. The theory clearly subscribes to the long-standing view that the self is fundamentally interpersonal (e.g., James, 1890). Indeed, we maintain that an individual’s overall repertoire of relational selves, stemming from all his or her relationships, is a major source of the interpersonal patterns that the individual enacts and experiences in the course of everyday interpersonal life—whether at work, at play, or in therapy.

The proposed theory focuses on the ways in which the self is related to specific other individuals—namely, the significant oth-

ers in one’s life—as distinct from how the self is related to social entities like groups or other social categories (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Deaux, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A *significant other* is defined as any individual who is or has been deeply influential in one’s life and in whom one is or once was emotionally invested. Thus, significant others may include members of one’s family of origin, such as parents and siblings, as well as people encountered outside of family relations, either early on or later in life—as in one’s “chosen family” and friends. Our concept of the relational self assumes that each of these significant others is linked to the self, with each linkage capturing relatively unique aspects of the self one is in relation to this significant other. The self is thus entangled, shaped in part by ties with significant others, whether these individuals are present physically or only symbolically (e.g., Baldwin, Carrell, & Lopez, 1990). One’s sense of self, including thoughts, feelings, motives, and self-regulatory strategies, may thus vary as a function of relations with significant others. Although we acknowledge that many aspects of the self do not implicate any such relations, we suggest that the relations linked to the self carry great importance for each individual.

The theory we propose builds on an extensive program of research on the social–cognitive model of transference (Andersen & Glassman, 1996), which examines the processes by which past assumptions and experiences in relationships with significant others manage to resurface in relations with new people. Although we have discussed some implications of this work for the self elsewhere (Andersen, Reznik, & Chen, 1997; S. Chen & Andersen, 1999), here we extend this thinking by proposing a theory that articulates how various manifestations of the self and, more broadly, personality can emerge in interpersonal contexts when transference is elicited. The theory adds to the growing literature on interpersonal approaches to the self (e.g., Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Baldwin, 1992; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Cross, 1990) as well as to the literature on social–cognitive views of personality (e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

The social–cognitive model of transference, which undergirds our theory, defines the phenomenon as occurring when a perceiv-

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The research reported in this article was supported by National Institute of Mental Health Grant RO1-MH48789 to Susan M. Andersen. Special thanks to Noah Glassman, Inga Reznik, and Michele Berk, who have made invaluable contributions to the research reported in this article. Thanks are also due to Kathy Berenson, Christina Carter, Regina Miranda, Tami Edwards, and Adam Klinger for their input.

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er's mental representation of a significant other is activated in an encounter with a new person, leading the perceiver to interpret the person in ways derived from the representation and also to respond emotionally, motivationally, and behaviorally to the person in ways that reflect the self–other relationship (Andersen & Glassman, 1996). Although significant-other representations are idiosyncratic in content and meaning, much research supports the view that the phenomenon of transference occurs by means of generalizable social–cognitive processes—that is, by means of the activation and use of these representations.

In line with the literature on knowledge accessibility (see Higgins, 1996c), our research has also shown that both chronic and transient sources of accessibility play a role in the activation of significant-other representations (Andersen, Glassman, Chen, & Cole, 1995). Chronic sources derive from the frequency with which a construct has been activated in the past, with high frequency resulting in a construct's chronic readiness to be activated, or its *chronic accessibility* (e.g., Bargh, 1999; Bargh & Thein, 1985; Higgins & King, 1981; Higgins, King, & Mavin, 1982). By contrast, *transient accessibility* stems from cues in the environment. For example, cues that perceivers are exposed to prior to encountering a stimulus person are priming stimuli that temporarily increase the accessibility of the construct, thereby heightening its likelihood of activation and use (e.g., Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979). Another transient source of accessibility lies in attended-to cues in a stimulus person that “match” stored knowledge, thereby heightening the accessibility of that knowledge (Higgins, 1989b, 1996c; Higgins & Brendl, 1995; see also Hardin & Rothman, 1997; E. R. Smith, 1990). The term *applicability* is often used to refer to this transient source because the matching stimulus cues apply, or are relevant to, stored knowledge (e.g., Higgins, 1996c).

Research has also shown that significant-other representations are chronically accessible, which means they have a special readiness to be activated regardless of contextual cues, although the presence of transient cues heightens this chronic readiness further (Andersen et al., 1995). In our research, we have relied heavily on cues in a stimulus person that match stored knowledge about a significant other—to transiently activate significant-other representations—because we view such applicability-based cues as an analog for cues that perceivers might encounter in ordinary, face-to-face interactions (S. Chen, Andersen, & Hinkley, 1999). Such cues need not be attended to in a conscious sense but instead may contribute to knowledge activation even if registered only beneath the threshold of conscious awareness (Glassman & Andersen, 1999a). Hence, we assume that people need not consciously draw analogies with known others for transference to occur.

Because significant others are likely to be of such profound importance in people's lives, representations of them should not only be chronically accessible but also highly laden with affect, which implies that these representations play a pervasive role in shaping interpretations and in defining emotional responses in many, if not most, social encounters. In fact, given the emotional and motivational relevance of significant others, transference is likely to be profoundly characterized by emotional content (e.g., Andersen, Glassman, & Gold, 1998). Yet at the same time, we do not concur with notions that transference is exclusively emotional or defensive or that it operates without cognitive mediation, nor do we assume that it is limited to therapeutic settings or to the

pathological or “neurotic” (J. R. Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Instead, our work indicates that transference occurs in everyday social contexts and among “normal” populations, thus depathologizing the nearly century-old concept. In short, prior experiences with significant others continuously shape a broad range of personal and interpersonal responses in daily life.

What is most central about our existing model of transference for the theory we propose here is its assumption that there are linkages in memory between significant-other representations and the self that reflect knowledge about who the self is in relation to each significant other. Such linkages imply that when a perceiver's significant-other representation is activated, this activation spreads to aspects of the self that are associated in memory with the particular significant other—that is, to the relevant *self-with-significant-other* (Hinkley & Andersen, 1996). As a result, interpretive biases in social perception emerge and, moreover, the perceiver's experience of the self comes to reflect, in part, the self he or she experiences with the significant other—even though the significant other is not there. This shift in the self involves shifts in affect, motivation, and behavior (Andersen, Reznik, & Manzella, 1996; Berk & Andersen, 2000).

#### A Theory of the Relational Self and Personality

Our current theory extends these earlier assumptions about the self and transference by embedding them within a more elaborated and precise conceptualization of the nature of self-knowledge and self-regulation and by considering how elements of relational selves are linked to personality and how they unfold across situations. In particular, unlike our earlier work, which focused on the idiographic nature of significant-other representations and of self–other linkages, here we incorporate normative, categorical elements of relational selves in the form of interpersonal roles and in the form of standards. We also integrate traditional individual differences in personality, which tend to be conceptualized normatively (i.e., categorically), that may also be pertinent to significant-other relationships. Doing so paves the way for a more integrative model of self and personality in which self and significant-other knowledge, however idiosyncratic in content, is associated with normative constructs that also operate prescriptively in the context of relationships with significant others. Our theory also extends our earlier work by conceptualizing how self-regulatory processes transpire, a matter central to most theories of self and personality (as well as to much of contemporary social cognition), and, in this way, treads still closer to the substance of personality as traditionally defined. Finally, we also spell out how our theory offers an interpersonal if–then model of personality, a concrete case of the broader if–then framework put forth by the cognitive–affective system theory of personality, which defines personality in terms of person–situation interactions (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

In essence, we propose that the various selves-with-significant-others one has stored in memory compose a set of possible relational selves—a system of knowledge that comes into play in the context of transference, with particular aspects of self–other knowledge brought to the fore as a function of the particular significant-other representation that is activated in the context. We argue, then, that an individual's overall repertoire of relational

selves is an influential source of his or her interpersonal patterns—and hence of the self and personality.

In this article, we first articulate the major propositions of our theory and then present evidence supporting the theory. Later, we consider related bodies of work on the self that are of special substantive relevance because they touch on similar themes from a broader vantage point in the field and thus locate our theory in the larger theoretical discourse and raise integrative questions. With the assumptions of our social-cognitive model of transference as a backdrop, we present our theory of the relational self and personality in five broad, overlapping propositions. The first elaborates on earlier assumptions about the nature of significant others and the relationships people have with them while bringing to bear new ideas central to our model of the relational self. The second addresses variability and stability in the self, establishing our theory as one that simultaneously addresses transient and long-standing influences on the self. Third, we argue that relational selves embody a wide variety of self-other knowledge, both idiographic elements that are unique to the self-other relationship as well as socially shared aspects reflecting normative roles (e.g., an authority figure in relation to a less experienced person) and self-standards (e.g., ideals the significant other holds for the self). Fourth, we make the claim that our view of the relational self and transference implies a theory of personality—not only in its stand on stability and variability in the self, but also in its recognition of both idiographic and nomothetic elements and its emphasis on basic human motivations and self-regulation. Finally, our fifth proposition posits that the model is a concrete case of the viewpoint that personality is best explained in terms of if-then relations. In accord with the cognitive-affective system theory of personality proposed by Mischel and Shoda (1995), particular situations evoke—because of their association with significant others—specific aspects of personality, in this case, the relational self.

*First Proposition: Relational Selves Are a Product of the Profound Importance of Significant Others*

At the crux of our theory is the idea that, given the profound importance of significant others in people's lives, the self and personality are shaped largely by experiences with significant others. The importance of these others derives from their emotional and motivational relevance for the self (e.g., Andersen et al., 1998; Higgins, 1987). They carry emotional-motivational significance because, at the very least, they serve a self-regulatory function. Emotional outcomes and motivational orientations often hinge on the expectations, standards, and responses of those closest to us (e.g., Andersen et al., 1998; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mikulincer, 1998). Research on self-discrepancy theory, for example, has clearly shown that, when salient, people's beliefs about the standards their significant others hold for them—and about whether they are meeting or failing to meet these standards—deeply influence people's emotional lives and motivational focus (Higgins, 1987, 1989a; Higgins, Loeb, & Moretti, 1995).

The emotional-motivational relevance of significant others is a primary basis for our assumption that linkages are likely to be formed and maintained in memory between knowledge about the self and knowledge about significant others. Figure 1 offers a simple depiction of our view of self-other linkages. Of course, the general notion that others play a role in the self is widely recognized by contemporary researchers (Aron & Aron, 1996; Baldwin, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Higgins, 1989a; Markus & Cross, 1990; McAdams, 1980; Ogilvie & Ashmore, 1991), just as it was by early self theorists (e.g., Cooley, 1902; James, 1890; Mead, 1934; Rogers, 1951; Sullivan, 1940, 1953). It is also an idea that cuts across psychological subdisciplines. Research on attachment theory, which assumes that mental models of the self are shaped

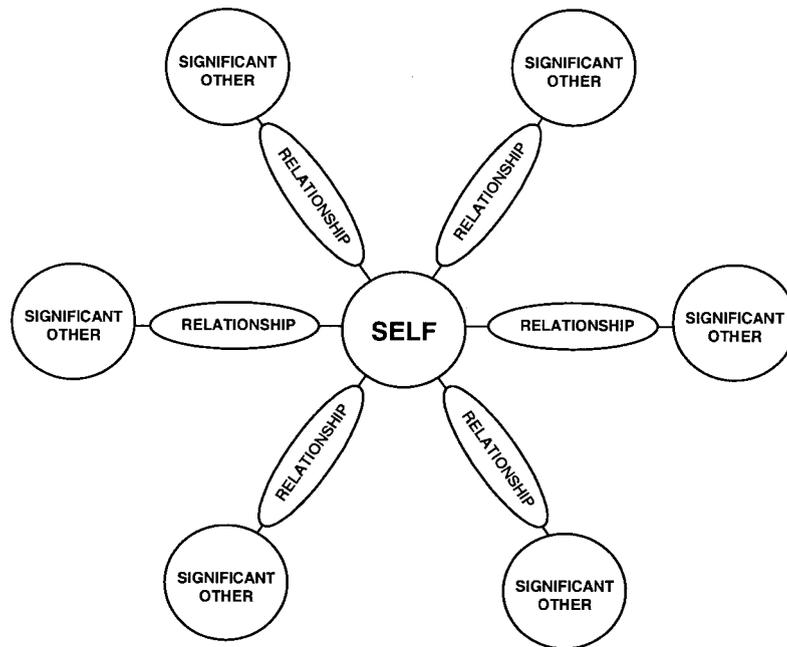


Figure 1. Linkages between the self and significant-other representations in memory.

largely by early experiences with caregivers (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bombar & Littig, 1996; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1985; Thompson, 1998), is a good example of this. Once examined mainly in clinical and developmental work, the theory has now made deep inroads into social and personality psychology (e.g., Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998; Brennan & Morris, 1997; Collins & Read, 1994; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer, 1995; for a review, see Simpson & Rholes, 1998).<sup>1</sup>

Our view of significant others and the self is especially compatible with the relational-schema approach (Baldwin, 1992). Like ours, that approach is rooted in basic social-cognitive principles and assumes, as we do, that linkages are stored in memory between self and significant-other representations, with each linkage embodying the typical patterns of relating with significant others. On the other hand, the approaches have diverged in emphasis. Whereas much of the research on relational schemas has focused on generic definitions of relational patterns (e.g., Baldwin, Fehr, Keedian, Seidel, & Thomson, 1993) and of self-aspects (e.g., Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996), we have emphasized the unique nature of significant-other representations and have focused on idiosyncratic conceptions of the particular self one is in relation to each significant other in one's life (Hinkley & Andersen, 1996; see S. Chen & Andersen, 1999) and of course on the phenomenon of transference. And although we now extend our thinking to normative constructs, the idiographic significant-other representation remains our bedrock, as does the transference phenomenon.

Beyond depicting self-other linkages, Figure 1 also reveals our assumption that people have multiple significant others, even though there are likely to be individual differences in both the number and the quality of significant-other relationships as well as in the level of "significance" or intimacy experienced in them. People are unlikely to have limitless significant others, however; the numbers are rarely huge. In any event, one's significant others are those who are deeply important to the person and have had an impact on his or her life. By definition, of course, there may be profound differences within and across individuals in the specific content of significant-other representations, which suggests, in turn, that there may also be considerable variability in the nature of the self one experiences with different significant others—including how adaptive or maladaptive the relational self and relationship tend to be. Although we have yet to systematically examine all of these assumptions, our research has verified that people not only experience little difficulty when asked to name various significant others but also exhibit considerable variability in how they characterize these individuals, the relationships with them, and their affective experiences and interpersonal roles in these relationships (Andersen et al., 1996; Baum & Andersen, 1999; see also Ashmore & Ogilvie, 1992; Bacon & Ashmore, 1985; Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996).

Our contention that people form multiple significant-other bonds fits well with the notion that there exists a fundamental human motivation for belonging and connection (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Moreover, one criterion that has been used to establish belonging as a basic need lies in the concept of *satiation*, which refers to the idea that, once belongingness needs are satisfied, people should be less motivated to form social bonds. Thus, forming relationships adheres to a principle of diminishing returns such that establishing new bonds is beneficial up to a point, after

which quantity becomes secondary to quality. To the extent that significant-other relationships are particularly effective in satisfying belongingness needs, we suggest that it is likely that satiation rules would apply to the formation of such relationships. Even if satiation were not to fully account for limits on the number of significant-other relationships one has, and other factors such as time constraints or geographic location were to play a larger role, there are likely to be limits on belonging needs (see Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

That people have a limited number of significant others does not imply a diminished role for these individuals in people's lives. Quite to the contrary, evidence suggests that people know so much more about significant others than about anyone else (e.g., Andersen & Cole, 1990), other than the self (e.g., Prentice, 1990), that even trivial or subtle tidbits of information that are observed directly (or inferred on the basis of what is observed) about a new person—such as interpersonal carriage, habits, inner qualities, or ways of thinking and reacting—may seem to match knowledge stored about a significant other (for a related argument, see Markman & Gentner, in press). Such applicability heightens the ordinarily chronic activation readiness of significant-other representations, thereby further increasing the likelihood of transference. Although perceivers process information about others in a bottom-up fashion to some degree, which should result in the activation of whatever stored constructs happen to be applicable, chronically accessible constructs, such as significant-other representations, are very likely to be brought to bear even in the absence of relevant, individuating cues (Andersen et al., 1995). In short, regardless of the precise number of significant others one has, the activation of significant-other representations—and associated relational selves—is likely to be quite prevalent.

In defining significant others, it is worth acknowledging the distinction between significant others who are "chosen" from those who are "given" in the way members of one's family of origin are. For chosen significant others, it is feasible that transference may have influenced not only one's initial perceptions of these individuals but also one's attraction to and ultimate choice of them. If one gravitates to people on the basis of their similarity to a previously known significant other (a prospect we have not directly examined), this might result in similarity between early and later developing significant-other representations. Nonetheless, we assume that new significant-other representations should eventually become relatively freestanding, at least in the sense that one knows that the new person is not literally one's parent, sibling, ex, or other significant other, and that numerous distinctive qualities are also likely. Hence, it should be the case that new significant-other relationships different from those with given (or nonselected) significant others should also form. Further, even if some degree of

<sup>1</sup> The notion that significant others may be "included" in the self (e.g., Aron, Aron, & Smollen, 1992)—and are thus part of the self—is a different perspective on the very considerable closeness of the self and significant others. Although that assumption and the model based on it have been fruitful both theoretically and empirically, they do not highlight specificity in the self-other relationship or the self one experiences when with the significant other, which are of fundamental concern in our model. We regard this sense of inclusion as a metric of closeness with the other (see also Aron & Fraley, 1999) rather than indicating there are no characteristics that distinguish the self from the other.

similarity ultimately exists between selected and nonselected significant others, this should not preclude each significant-other representation from being relatively unique, nor the associated relationship and relational self. Moreover, each significant-other representation should evolve over time in its own way, being revised and updated with continued use and experience, as with any other representation (Conway & Ross, 1984; Loftus, 1982; Loftus & Greene, 1980; see also Wachtel, 1981), and such changes should favor differentiation by role and by other relationship-defining features (see also Showers & Kevlyn, 1999). At the same time, we assume that even with changes over time in significant-other representations, there should be a degree of continuity in one's significant-other representations, as stored in memory (e.g., Demo, 1992; Greenwald, 1980; Rosenberg, 1979; Strauman, 1996; Wylie, 1961, 1974), and thus in one's repertoire of relational selves.

Finally, although our theory is focused on interpersonal aspects of the self, we acknowledge, of course, that self-knowledge involves many other aspects and domains, such as one's abilities, values, and goals (e.g., Higgins, 1996b). Indeed, even self-aspects that involve significant-other relationships may include knowledge that extends beyond significant others, such as personal standards regarding how others in general should be treated. Nonetheless, the profound emotional-motivational importance of significant others, and the chronic accessibility of significant-other representations, both suggest a strong, baseline influence on day-to-day functioning. Moreover, when combined with the presence of transient, applicability-based cues in a new person, significant-other representations are especially readily triggered. Although representations of anyone one knows or has known, whether significant or not, may exert an influence on social perception in this way, the depth, extensiveness, and detail of the knowledge represented about significant others, as well as both the mundane and sublime nature of what is known, should make significant-other representations particularly likely to be activated in response to new people. Thus, although self-knowledge is not limited to one's selves with significant others, these relationships are likely to play an especially influential role in the nature of the self.

### *Second Proposition: Relational Selves Emerge in the Context of Transference*

Like many social-cognitive theories of the self, our theory assumes that self-knowledge is extensive and well-organized in memory (e.g., Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Linville & Carlston, 1994; Markus, 1977), even though its exact structure remains an open question (e.g., Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Higgins, Van Hook, & Dorfman, 1988; Niedenthal & Beike, 1997; C. Showers, 1992). We assume as well that given the complex array of knowledge one has about the self, one's entire pool of self-knowledge cannot be cognitively accessible at the same time. Rather, only a subset of this pool is in working memory at any given moment (e.g., Linville & Carlston, 1994; Niedenthal & Beike, 1997). The *working self-concept* is the term often used to refer to this subset (e.g., Markus & Wurf, 1987), and it is widely believed that it is the working self-concept, rather than any sort of monolithic self-representation, that guides cognition, affect, and behavior on an ongoing basis (Higgins & Bargh, 1987; see also Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). In our theory of the relational self and

personality, we focus on the particular relational self that is active in transference.

*The activation of relational selves in transference.* If the self varies as a function of the self-knowledge that is currently active in working memory, what determines which self-aspects are activated? Much research indicates that, just as for knowledge activation in general, different aspects of self-knowledge are rendered accessible in part as a function of cues in the immediate situation (e.g., Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Linville & Carlston, 1994; Markus & Wurf, 1987; McGuire, McGuire, & Cheever, 1986). In essence, the self is constructed anew as a function of the current context (cf. Read, Vanman, & Miller, 1997; E. R. Smith, 1996). For example, cues in one's workplace are likely to elicit the set of cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral responses associated with one's "professional self," whereas cues in a party setting elicit knowledge reflecting one's "partying self."

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of numerous approaches to contextual variability in the self, with *context* conceptualized broadly in some approaches (e.g., Deaux, 1993; Mischel & Shoda, 1995) and more narrowly in others—such as in terms of particular motives (e.g., Cantor, Markus, Niedenthal, & Nurius, 1986; Higgins, 1989a, 1996b), self-esteem contingencies (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), social roles (e.g., Linville, 1985; Markus & Nurius, 1986), or relationships (e.g., Baldwin, 1992; Ogilvie & Ashmore, 1991). Variability in the self is also central to theory and research on present, actual, possible, and future selves (e.g., Cantor & Zirkel, 1990; Higgins, 1987, 1996a; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Moretti & Higgins, 1990; C. Showers, 1992). Our theory focuses on variability in the self that occurs in contexts as a function of whether or not transference is triggered. We argue that when a significant-other representation is activated in a given context, associated self-with-significant-other knowledge is brought into working memory—that is, the working self-concept becomes infused with knowledge reflecting the relevant relational self.

*Transient and chronic influences on relational selves.* If relational selves emerge by virtue of the triggering of transference, then contextual variability in the self that reflects different selves-with-significant-others ought to emerge in varying contexts depending on the same social-cognitive principles that govern the activation and use of significant-other representations. Thus, these sources of accessibility should combine to determine whether a given relational self is activated. In terms of transient sources in the immediate context, we focus on cues emanating from a new person that make knowledge about the significant other applicable, no matter how subtly. As noted, we view such applicability-based cues as an ecologically valid source of transient activation for significant-other representations, because they can be likened to meeting someone who bears some resemblance to a significant other (S. Chen et al., 1999). Thus, just as noninterpersonal cues, such as those in one's private office setting, are likely to elicit a particular subset of self-knowledge reflecting the self one is when alone at work, interpersonal cues in a new person, such as the way he or she listens, holds one's gaze, or draws one out, or even his or her smell, gestures, facial features, habits, or attitudes, can all serve as applicability-based cues that contribute to the activation of a relevant significant-other representation, along with the associated relational self.

Although the notion of the working self-concept emphasizes contextual variability in the self, we argue that chronic, long-term

influences attributable to the chronic accessibility of significant-other representations operate alongside transient influences on relational selves. The chronic activation readiness of significant-other representations serves as a steady source of accessibility for the relational selves that are linked to them—because the activation of a significant-other representation spreads to associated self–other knowledge. Overall, then, variability in relational selves should emerge on the basis of transient sources of accessibility that contribute to the activation and use of significant-other representations, whereas continuity should derive from the chronic accessibility of these representations. In short, the working self-concept is shaped in part by which, if any, significant-other representation is activated in a given context, because the activation of such a representation brings into play the relevant self-with-significant-other.

### *Third Proposition: Relational Selves Have Both Idiographic and Socially Shared Elements*

As indicated above, the social–cognitive model of transference is grounded in the literature on knowledge accessibility (Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, & Tota, 1986; Higgins, 1989b, 1990, 1996c; Higgins & King, 1981; see also J. S. Bruner, 1957; Kelly, 1955; Sedikides & Skowronski, 1990, 1991; Wyer & Srull, 1986). In this theoretical context, we have assumed that each mental representation of a significant other designates a specific individual, in contrast to representations that designate shared notions of a social category, type, or group, such as “Asians” or “politicians” (e.g., Andersen & Klatzky, 1987; Brewer, 1988; Cantor & Mischel, 1979; S. T. Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Higgins & King, 1981). Significant-other representations are thus *n*-of-one representations, which are also referred to as *exemplars* (Linville & Fischer, 1993; E. R. Smith & Zarate, 1992). Although these representations contain generic knowledge—generalizations about the person—it is the significant person *per se* rather than a generic label that accounts for the associations among bits of this knowledge.

The distinction between exemplars and generic constructs is supported by evidence showing that memory is far more specific than would be expected if only generic knowledge were retained (e.g., E. E. Smith et al., 1998; E. R. Smith & Zarate, 1990, 1992). In addition, considerable research has shown that exemplars are used in social perception, as are generic social constructs, and that exemplar-based processing is readily distinguishable from category-based processing (e.g., E. R. Smith, Stewart, & Buttram, 1992). Indeed, we and others have shown that the significant-other representation is one type of exemplar that is also chronically accessible—relative to generic social constructs (e.g., Andersen et al., 1995; S. Chen et al., 1999; Karylowski, Konarzewski, & Motes, 2000).<sup>2</sup>

Consistent with exemplar notions, our past work has emphasized the uniqueness of each significant other in one’s life and has argued that knowledge about each significant other is linked in memory with relatively unique self-aspects and relational patterns. We have thus assumed that significant-other representations house various forms of idiographic knowledge about the other—for example, physical characteristics and personality attributes (e.g., Andersen & Cole, 1990; Prentice, 1990), interpersonal behaviors (e.g., Andersen et al., 1998), and inner feelings and motivations (e.g., Andersen et al., 1998; S. Chen, 2001; Johnson & Boyd,

1995). When an idiographic significant-other representation is activated, then, the changes reflecting the relevant relational self should be idiographic as well.

The present theory continues to recognize the idiographic elements of significant others and relational selves but goes further by positing that when an idiographic significant-other representation is activated, this in turn activates not only idiographic self-with-significant-other knowledge but also generic, socially shared constructs, such as social categories or social identities, that are linked to the significant other. This contention is buttressed by recent research showing, for example, that gender categories are automatically activated when significant-other representations are primed, which is evidence for a link in memory between significant-other representations and generic social categories (Karylowski et al., 2000). Applied to our theory, such data suggest that activation of a significant-other representation should spread to related normative constructs in the context of transference.

The possible forms of generic knowledge that may be linked to a significant-other representation and self-with-other relationship should, of course, cover a wide range. One possible form is the interpersonal roles that the self and significant other maintain in the relationship (e.g., A. P. Fiske, 1992; see also Bugental, 2000). If relational selves include knowledge about one’s role in relation to a significant other, then this role relationship should be invoked when transference occurs in the context of an encounter with a new person. As a result, role-based expectations, along with any affective consequences linked to such expectations, should play out in the interaction with the new other (Baum & Andersen, 1999). For example, a younger man may remind an older woman of her younger brother, and she may thus take on the “older sister” role with him, likewise expecting him to take on the “younger brother” role with her. In a different version of this example, she may view the exact ways her brother relates to her as an exemplar of how all other younger men will relate to her, a phenomenon that would render idiographic the semantic category designating this role. Similarly, if a significant other was one’s “teacher” or “romantic partner,” the ways in which the significant other behaved might be used as an exemplar of how all “teachers” or all “romantic partners” will “relate to me.”

Generic, socially shared elements of one’s relational selves should also include beliefs about the standards that significant others hold for oneself. For example, they may include beliefs about a significant other’s wishes about whom one should ideally be (*ideals*), or about whom one ought to be (*oughts*). In self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, 1996b), although self-standards held from the standpoint of significant others are assessed idiographically, they are defined in normative, categorical terms. Our theory proposes that such normative elements of self–other relationships are activated in transference. Specifically, when a significant-other representation is activated, associated self-standards should come to the fore, eliciting negative affective consequences to the extent that one experiences a sense of failing

<sup>2</sup> Of course, a generic category label may still call to mind a specific-person exemplar (E. R. Smith, 1992, 1998), and a specific-person exemplar may also call to mind a generic category, because these kinds of knowledge are connected in memory (see Karylowski et al., 2000).

to meet these standards—for example, of not being who a significant other wishes one to be or believes it is one's duty to be.

*Fourth Proposition: Relational Selves Provide a Basis for an Interactionist Model of Personality*

Our fourth proposition is that relational selves provide a basis for an interactionist model of personality. The crux of this contention is the idea that an individual's overall set of relational selves, from which derive aspects of the self that are experienced in transference, is an influential source of one's interpersonal patterns. Below we describe the precise ways our theory of the relational self extend into the realm of personality.

*A Person × Situation model of personality.* Until fairly recently, relatively little research systematically examined personality as a function of the varying situations individuals encounter (e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 1995). This is in part because the field has been slow to identify and agree on a language with which to conceptualize interactive processes in personality. On the other hand, the social-cognitive language of knowledge accessibility is increasingly widely regarded as providing one way to frame such models (Higgins, 1990; Mischel, 1999). This is the language of our theory.

The social-cognitive language of knowledge accessibility allows us to apply an interactionist framework to our theory that addresses personality psychologists' aim of identifying regularities in the person, as well as social psychologists' aim of identifying situations that have an impact on people across the board. We argue that regularities in the person lie in an individual's chronically accessible constructs—in particular, in the chronic set of significant-other representations and associated self-with-significant-other knowledge he or she has available in memory. This set of representations, by virtue of its high activation readiness, is a steady source of the person's responses, as noted above. Coupled with these sources of continuity, there is the impact of interpersonal situations that may trigger a perceiver's significant-other representation, consciously or nonconsciously, thereby enhancing the likelihood of its use and thus of the emergence of the constellation of responses that defines the relevant self-with-significant-other. Transference brings into play different relational selves depending on the situation and what it cues. In this regard, our theory reflects an interactionist model of personality, in which personality is a function of both the person and the situation (e.g., Carson, 1969; Endler, 1984; Magnussen, 1990; Mischel, 1968, 1973; Pervin & Lewis, 1978).

*Personality: Idiographic and nomothetic.* Nomothetic differences in where individuals stand on specific trait dimensions have been the classic basis for understanding individual differences in personality. Rather than adopting an exclusively nomothetic, trait-based approach, however, we conceptualize personality in both idiographic and nomothetic terms. On the one hand, we argue that the idiographic constructs individuals have available in memory are what shape their subjective interpretations. They endow these interpretations with meaning and give psychological significance to persons and events, which guides responses (Higgins, 1990; Mischel, 1973, 1990; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Hence, we argue that these idiographic constructs are as important a source of individual differences as are traditional, nomothetically defined individual differences. In fact, interpretive

and behavioral correlates of trait-based individual differences may well be linked to the content of idiographic constructs and idiographic self-knowledge (e.g., Higgins, 1987; see also Dodge & Price, 1994). For these reasons and more, personality theorists have long argued that an idiographic approach sensitive to the nuances of people's lives and meaning systems is essential to effective theory (e.g., Allport, 1937; Kelly, 1955). We concur that individual differences are best understood, at least in part, in idiographic terms—as implied by our idiographic treatment of the contents of significant-other representations and of the applicability-based cues that best activate them—even though we define the processes underlying transference as generalizable across individuals. In short, we assume that idiographic differences in significant-other knowledge and associated self-with-significant-other knowledge are critical to understanding personality (e.g., Epstein, 1983; Pervin, 1985; Snyder & Cantor, 1998).

On the other hand, our theory also incorporates normative, categorical elements of self, relationships, and personality, as noted above. Categorical individual differences in personality purported to involve significant others should thus interface with the processes proposed in our theory. For example, individual differences in normatively defined self-standards held from the standpoint of significant others (e.g., oughts), and in discrepancies between actual self-views and these standards (Higgins, 1987), should elicit the specific affects and self-regulatory processes predicted by self-discrepancy theory when an idiographic significant-other representation is activated.

*Motivational underpinnings of personality.* Most broad-based theories of personality have assumed that particular motivations are key to how the self and personality develop and function, and any adequate model of personality must therefore address matters of motivation. In our theory, we take the view that motives and goals are stored in memory as mental constructs and, like any other construct, can be activated and thereby shape cognition, affect, and behavior in goal-derived ways (e.g., Bargh, 1990, 1997; Bargh & Gollwitzer, 1994). Motivations involving significant others, then, may be stored as part of relational selves, so that when transference occurs, the motives are then pursued in relations with new others.

What motivations are likely to be linked to relational selves? A small number of fundamental human motivations are assumed across a wide range of theoretical and empirical perspectives, and amid these, the motivation that is perhaps most regularly identified as a basic human motivation is the need for human connection—for relatedness, belonging, caring, tenderness, or attachment (see, e.g., Adler, 1927/1957; Bakan, 1966; Batson, 1990; Bowlby, 1969; Deci, 1995; Fairbairn, 1952; J. R. Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Helgeson, 1994; Horney, 1939, 1945; McAdams, 1985, 1989; Rogers, 1951; Safran, 1990; Sullivan, 1940, 1953). This motivation is the focus of a growing body of work showing that being connected with others (or not) has consequences for cognition, affect, and behavior (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; E. R. Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999) and, indeed, mental health. Contingencies for being approved of or loved by significant others, which is another way to conceptualize connection needs, are also widely assumed to have profound consequences for affect and behavior (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2000; Bandura, 1986; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Higgins, 1989a, 1991).

The need for human connection lies at the heart of our theory. In our view, it provides the primary impetus behind the self's entanglements with significant others. Consciously or unconsciously, it is the "why" behind the initiation and maintenance of these bonds. Moreover, it is the very basis for the significance of these individuals in people's lives—the desire to love and be loved, to care and be cared for, to trust and to be trusted, to respect and to be respected.

Of course, various other fundamental motives operate alongside needs for connection—for example, needs for autonomy or freedom, for competence or mastery, for meaning, and for felt security, the latter of which is to be out of harm's way, literally and figuratively (for a fuller discussion, see Andersen et al., 1997; see also, e.g., Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Bakan, 1966; Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989; Baumeister, 1991; Becker, 1971, 1973; J. Bruner, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Epstein, 1973; Frankl, 1959; Glendin, 1962; Guidano & Liotti, 1983; Heidegger, 1962; Horney, 1939; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Jung, 1933; Klinger, 1977; Park & Folkman, 1997; Pennebaker, in press; Seligman, 1975; Silver & Wortman, 1980; Sullivan, 1953; White, 1959). Presumably, these needs can at times work at cross-purposes with each other and with the need for connection. As such, profoundly conflicting feelings can come to be associated with significant others if one perceives that satisfaction of needs is unlikely or problematic. For example, the need for connection might be blocked with a significant other if one were to express another need, such as the need to behave more autonomously in the relationship. On the other hand, in our view, the need for connection is so primordial that when it is blocked, it may well be sought through any alternative means available, including through paradoxical means, such as through a more exclusive focus on competencies and accomplishments—if tenderness and love are in short supply. Although our research has yet to examine this, some of our evidence speaks to trade-offs and the ways in which needs for connection may promote or alternatively bump up against needs for felt security, as reflected, for example, in self-enhancement processes (Andersen et al., 1996; Hinkley & Andersen, 1996). Overall, it is of considerable relevance to personality that such motives are linked to significant others, because this implies that motivations involving significant others and expectancies based on outcomes experienced with these others should be activated in transference.

Our model also builds on the motivational underpinnings of the interpersonal theory of personality developed by Harry Stack Sullivan (1953). Sullivan viewed personality as "the relatively enduring pattern of recurrent interpersonal situations [that] characterize a human life" (p. 110). Not only does his model articulate how varying aspects of the self arise as a function of situations in which transference occurs, but it also assumes that motivation, at the heart of most theories of personality, involves two basic needs. First, there is a need for satisfaction, which encompasses the urge to express oneself, including one's own perceptions and emotions, and to develop one's competencies, while also experiencing tenderness and connection with others. Second is the need for security, which involves the urge to feel safe and protected.

Needs for connection, competence, and security, as we conceive them, can thus be found in Sullivan's model. And, coupled with real interpersonal experiences with significant others, these needs form the basis of what is contained in the "personifications" of

significant others and of the self that he argued people ultimately form, as well as the "dynamisms" that reflect self–other relationships (Sullivan, 1953). The motivational material contained within personifications and dynamisms is thus what is "transferred" in transference, although because of many substantive shifts away from classical Freudian theory (e.g., the drive–structure model), Sullivan termed the transference phenomenon *parataxic distortion*. Unlike our theory, his was not a cognitive one, but it did assume, as we do, that personifications and dynamisms associated with significant others can emerge with new people, both inside and outside of psychotherapy.<sup>3</sup> Ours is a mental-representational model (see also Singer, 1988; Wachtel, 1981; Westen, 1988) that includes assumptions about fundamental human motivations.

*Self-regulatory aspects of personality.* Fundamental human motivations are relevant to our theory not only because people seek to satisfy these needs with significant others, but also because failing to do so should be experienced as distressing and should tend to provoke self-regulation, which in itself is closely tied to personality. A consideration of the role of self-regulation in transference thus offers a window on how different elements of our theory function.

Self-regulation involves overriding one's own responses or modulating them on the basis of some experience of threat, such as an unpleasant emotional state (Carver & Scheier, 1982, 1998; Larsen, 2000; Taylor, 1991; Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Although self-regulation is multifaceted in its content and the processes by which it occurs (see Kruglanski, 1996; Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996), one way it can work is that emotions stemming from threat can function as a signal that something is off-kilter and that an adjustment is needed (e.g., Baumeister, 1997; Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Wyer, Clore, & Isbell, 1999). Of course, such adjustments are not always made—for example, when the signal is insufficiently alarming or when one lacks the necessary cognitive resources or the motivation to do so (Erber & Erber, 2000). We argue, however, that the emotional–motivational relevance of significant others makes self-regulatory processes likely in the context of such relationships and thus important in understanding how the relational self functions. Indeed, as described earlier, the importance of significant others derives in large measure from the self-regulatory function they have (or have had) for one's own emotional life—for example, for one's disappointments, hopes, and fears (e.g., Andersen & Glassman, 1996; Bowlby, 1969; Higgins, 1987, 1996a, 1996b; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Higgins et al., 1995; Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Strauman & Higgins, 1987).

Because remaining connected and feeling secure or protected from harm are essential motivations, and are especially pertinent in relationships with significant others, these motivations should be reflected in what is regulated and why in relation to significant others. Moreover, if self-regulation is wrapped up with significant

<sup>3</sup> In Sullivan's model, "real" interactions and "real" learning are influential in personifications and dynamisms (Sullivan, 1940, 1953), which means that his theory also eschews the relatively exclusive reign of unconscious fantasy proposed by Freud (1912/1958; see J. R. Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Klein, 1932), who assumed that the realities of one's upbringing and treatment at the hands of others matter little because people are largely lost in their own unconscious fantasies.

others, then self-regulatory responses typical with a significant other should be evoked in transference. More specifically, we propose that the kinds of self-regulatory strategies that arise in transference should be a function of the nature of the experienced threat—that is, if it is a threat to the self or a threat to the significant other. Threats to the self should undermine security and safety and should thus elicit self-protective responses, aimed at recovering a sense of self-esteem, capability, and security. Such self-protective self-regulation should occur in transference when, for example, the activated significant-other representation evokes negative aspects of the self experienced with this other, which constitutes a threat to the self.

Where threats to the self compromise security needs, threats to the significant other cast one's need for connection with the significant other in peril. When such threats arise, relationship-protective responses should be elicited. An example of such relationship-protective self-regulation can be seen in research showing that, when negative events in a valued romantic relationship are made salient, people tend to soften the negative implications of these events, presumably as a means of feeling better about their significant other and the relationship (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994). Applied to the context of transference, when negative aspects of a valued significant other are encountered in a new person, this should pose a threat to the significant other and the relationship, thereby provoking relationship-protective self-regulatory responses aimed at restoring one's sense of connection with the other. Moreover, in such a positive transference, one should also expect the new person to regard one positively in the way one's significant other does or has, and should desire to be emotionally close to the new person accordingly (Andersen et al., 1996), all while diminishing the person's negatives. The desire to love and be loved by significant others—and contingencies for same—should thus be stored in memory along with these representations (see also Higgins, 1996b, 1996d) and activated as part of one's relational selves. Overall, we argue that self-protective self-regulation focuses on addressing security needs, whereas relationship-protective self-regulation is primarily in the service of connection needs.

Self-regulatory processes may also emerge in more complex forms in transference. We propose a few such forms in an intersection between our model and self-discrepancy theory (e.g., Higgins, 1987, 1996a). In that theory, ideal self-standards (ideals) are associated with a self-regulatory system that is attuned to attaining (and not losing) positive outcomes, whereas ought self-standards (oughts) are associated with a self-regulatory system attuned to avoiding (and preventing) negative outcomes (Higgins, 1996b). Put differently, ideals involve wanting to satisfy nurturance needs, whereas oughts involve seeking to satisfy security needs. The self-standards that are part of our theory are those held from the perspective of a significant other. We propose that when a significant-other representation is activated in an interpersonal encounter, the ideals and oughts associated with the significant other should be accordingly activated, thereby launching the corresponding self-regulatory system and subtle shifts in how one self-regulates in the encounter.

Finally, we assume that self-regulation is most likely to occur in transference when it is or was also a well-practiced response in the actual relationship with the significant other. In this sense, our theory may lay the groundwork for a more systematic tracking of

various kinds of suffering and resilience that may occur in transference (e.g., Andersen & Berk, 1998; Andersen, Chen, & Miranda, 2002). In turn, it may carry wide-ranging implications for mental health not yet understood, while at the same time providing the underpinnings for conceptualizing the self and personality in interpersonal and social-cognitive terms. The fact that our work may have implications for the long-standing clinical assumption that human suffering may result from inappropriately superimposing maladaptive responses learned in previous relationships onto new relations, which remains of great interest to clinicians (Andersen & Berk, 1998; Andersen & Glassman, 1996), adds to its relevance to personality theory. For now, however, we limit our scope to transference as a phenomenon that does not necessarily involve suffering or “neurosis” and that occurs quite generally in everyday social perception, while noting as well that the interpretive, affective, motivational, and behavioral consequences that occur in transference may speak to such suffering.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Fifth Proposition: Relational Selves are Cognitive-Affective Units in an If-Then Model of Personality*

As a natural extension of the preceding propositions, our fifth and final proposition is that our theory can be seen as a concrete case of Mischel and Shoda's (1995) cognitive-affective system theory of personality (see also Mischel, 1968, 1973, 1990, 1999). Like ours, their theory takes a social-cognitive, interactionist approach to personality, with the central argument that personality functioning is best explained in terms of if-then relations.

*If-then relations as basic units of personality.* Countering long-standing assumptions about cross-situational consistency in trait-based personality responding, the if-then approach defines personality in terms of the different responses (i.e., thens) that an individual exhibits in different classes of situations (i.e., ifs). It assumes that each individual possesses an idiosyncratic constellation of if-then relations and that the individual's overall pattern of if-thens reflects his or her unique “personality signature” (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Defining personality in these terms allows for variability in personality responding across different situations while capturing stability at the level of an individual's signature. Said differently, continuity in personality is conceived of as stemming from the predictability of cross-situational variability. From this perspective, variability in an individual's responding across different situations should not be averaged over or dismissed—that is, treated as error. Varying responses across situations are what constitutes the individual's personality.

<sup>4</sup> Another aspect of our conceptualization of self-regulation—not tested directly here—is our assumption that the person is an active organism—an agent—who proactively regulates, maintains, and otherwise modulates preferred psychological states. This assumption ultimately extends beyond the individual as merely actively processing information to the self-determination of one's own responses in accord with intrinsic interests, dreams, and plans (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-regulation that is intrinsically motivated—or self-determined—should facilitate health and well-being, whereas that which is extrinsically motivated or controlled should not (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This should hold in transference, as it does in other contexts, where, for example, extrinsic control by a significant other may compromise needs for autonomy and freedom, even while one seeks to satisfy needs for connection by maintaining the relationship.

A key element of this if–then model is the idea that situations, or ifs, are subjectively rather than objectively defined. Thus, objective situations carry idiosyncratic meaning for the individual. The model argues that situations trigger specific cognitive–affective units—such as encodings, expectancies, feelings, and goals—which are what then give rise to the particular responses the individual exhibits in these situations (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The cognitive–affective units that are activated in a given objective situation reflect the unique psychological situation experienced by the individual (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; see also S. Chen, 2001; Higgins, 1990). It is this unique psychological situation that mediates the if–then relation—that is, the relation between the objective situation and the response exhibited in it. In short, the model recognizes idiographic differences in how people make sense of different situations and thus respond in them (see also Higgins, 1990; Higgins et al., 1982; Kelly, 1955; Mischel, 1973).<sup>5</sup>

A growing body of evidence supports this if–then conceptualization of personality. It is impressive that this evidence has emerged from in situ research in which behavior has been observed in a wide range of naturalistic situations and assessed over time (e.g., Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1989, 1994; Wright & Mischel, 1987, 1988).

*Our theory of the relational self as a case of an if–then model of personality.* Our theory of the relational self is readily conceptualized in if–then terms. We too argue that variability across different situations is fundamental to personality. In our case, we focus on the variability that occurs by virtue of the activation of different relational selves in interpersonal situations that trigger transference. Our theory also converges with the broader if–then model in the idea that idiographic psychological situations, rather than objectively defined ones, mediate if–then relations. From our perspective, significant-other representations and associated relational self-knowledge are the cognitive–affective units that, when activated, yield the idiographic psychological situations that form the basis for the particular responses individuals exhibit in particular settings.

At the same time, our theory is unique in its specification of interpersonal situations and of the activation and use of significant-other representations as social–cognitive processes that predict variability and stability in personality. Accordingly, it is also unique in its specific focus on those aspects of personality that reflect relational selves. The focus is on interpersonal elements of personality, and the assumption is that significant-other representations, coupled with associated self–other knowledge, constitute a kind of interpersonal substrate of personality. This substrate is interpersonal because it reflects the different selves one has in relation to significant others. Each relational self embodies the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral responses that emerge in relations with the relevant significant other. Thus, the ifs in our more targeted if–then model are situations involving other people who, by virtue of their resemblance to a significant other, trigger transference, and the thens are the interpretive tendencies as well as affective, motivational, and behavioral responses associated with the relevant relational self that come into play. That is, in our model, the new person one encounters is the interpersonal situation. Hence, although we know that situations can and do directly evoke meanings and various personal responses—as entering one’s childhood home may evoke desires to escape the grip

of one’s family—we focus on cues in a new person that evoke knowledge of a particular other person and relationship, with implications for how the self is experienced.

Overall, we view our theory of the relational self as an important new member of the family of perspectives and models that conceptualize personality in if–then terms. Although the research testing our theory, which we present in subsequent sections, uses in situ methods in the laboratory rather than those in the real-world contexts that have been used to test the broader if–then model (see Mischel & Shoda, 1995), it is carefully controlled, experimental work in which we have assessed a wide range of responses as a function of contextual cues that trigger transference.

### *Summary of the Theory*

To summarize, we have laid out a theory of the relational self and personality in several broad, overlapping propositions. Our starting point is the profound relevance of significant others to people’s emotional and motivational lives, which paves the way for linkages between significant others and the self. For each individual, the result is a set of relational selves, each embodying the relatively unique self one experiences in relation to the given significant other, including the typical relationship patterns between self and other. Because relational selves are linked to significant-other representations, when such a representation is activated, the relevant relational self is activated accordingly, infusing the working self-concept with knowledge that reflects the self in relation to the significant other. In short, relational selves emerge in contexts that trigger transference. This implies that variability and continuity in one’s relational selves depends on the same principles that govern the activation and use of significant-other representations—namely, transient and chronic accessibility. Variability arises as a function of contextual cues that trigger transference, whereas continuity arises from the chronicity of significant-other representations and associated relational-self knowledge.

Although significant-other representations are exemplars, and prior work has emphasized their idiographic nature, we have proposed that relational selves contain both idiographic and socially shared elements. Thus, when transference occurs, idiographic as well as normatively defined shifts in the self should occur—all reflecting the relevant relational self. That such shifts in the self occur as a function of transference provides the basis for an interactionist model of personality. We have argued that relational selves emerge as a function of the person—an individual’s idiographic set of significant-other representations and associated relational selves—and the situation, contextual cues that render the activation of a significant-other representation more likely.

Our model is also tied to the personality literature in several other ways. Namely, it shares a kinship with theories emphasizing both idiographic and nomothetic elements of personality; has motivational underpinnings, as most broad-based theories of personality do; and incorporates self-regulatory processes, which are

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the model explicitly argues that objective situations are not what determine behavior. Instead, behavior depends on the “acquired meaning of situational features” (Mischel & Shoda, 1995, p. 252), which is idiographically defined.

basic to personality functioning. Finally, our model is located in the broader context of social–cognitive, interactionist theories of personality and is a more targeted example of an if–then model of personality.

### The Evidence

Having laid out the key propositions of our theory, we now present a body of research which, in general terms, demonstrates that when a significant-other representation is activated, the self in relation to this other is set into motion. The activation of this relational self, which is one among the individual's overall set of selves-with-significant-others, involves the emergence of the specific set of emotions, motivations, and self-regulatory processes associated with the self–other relationship, as well as shifts in how one experiences the self when with this other.

#### *Paradigm and Evidence for the Social–Cognitive Model of Transference*

As a backdrop for the findings most pertinent to our theory, we first briefly describe our paradigm and the basic evidence for transference (Andersen & Glassman, 1996). A distinguishing feature of the paradigm is its use of idiographic methods (Allport, 1937; Kelly, 1955; Lamiell, 1981) in a nomothetic, experimental design (Andersen & Glassman, 1996; see also Higgins, 1990; Pelham, 1993). This paradigm enables us to examine nomothetic processes—namely, the activation and use of significant-other representations—using content meaningful to each individual's life.

The paradigm involves two sessions. In the pretest session, we ask research participants to name and describe their significant others by generating short, idiographic sentences about them. They are also asked to identify adjectives that are irrelevant to their significant others. Some of these idiographic materials are then used as stimuli in an ostensibly unrelated experimental session conducted several weeks later, in which the irrelevant adjectives serve as filler items.

In the experiment, participants are exposed to descriptive sentences about a new person, some of which were derived from those they generated earlier (along with fillers) or from those a yoked participant had generated. We thus manipulate whether or not the new person resembles, to some degree, the participant's own significant other. In the resemblance condition, the significant-other-derived descriptors serve as applicability-based cues for the transient activation of the corresponding significant-other representation. Hence, transient activation of the participant's significant-other representation occurs in this condition and not in the no-resemblance condition. In the latter condition, each participant is yoked with a randomly selected participant in the resemblance condition and is exposed to descriptors of that person's significant other. No 2 control participants are yoked with the same person, and because each yoked pair encounters the same exact descriptors, the precise contents of the stimuli are perfectly controlled. Of course, participants are randomly assigned to each resemblance condition, enabling causal conclusions to be drawn from this manipulation.

*Significant-other-derived inference and memory about the new person.* Most of the research on transference has used one or both of two standard measures of the phenomenon. The first is the

extent to which perceivers base their inferences and memory about the new person on their stored knowledge about the significant other—that is, the extent to which they go beyond the information given (J. S. Bruner, 1957) about the person. Research has shown that participants in the resemblance condition report higher recognition-memory confidence about having been exposed to descriptors that had not actually been presented, but that do characterize their significant other, as compared with participants in the no-resemblance condition. Evidence across numerous studies has shown such inference and memory effects (Andersen et al., 1995, 1996; Andersen & Baum, 1994; Andersen & Cole, 1990; Baum & Andersen, 1999; Berk & Andersen, 2000; S. Chen et al., 1999; Glassman & Andersen, 1999a, 1999c; Hinkley & Andersen, 1996). The data have also shown that such effects are reliably stronger for significant-other representations than they are for nonsignificant-other representations or for social categories such as stereotypes (for a review, see S. Chen & Andersen, 1999). Hence, the phenomenon cannot be reduced to what occurs for any person representation or for any social category, nor to global implicit theories about people. Research has also indicated that the effects cannot be reduced to self-generation effects (Greenwald & Banaji, 1989). Finally, research has shown that it occurs for both positively and negatively regarded significant others and thus is not due to affective valence (e.g., Andersen & Baum, 1994; Andersen et al., 1996).

Finally, as noted in prior sections, research has demonstrated the chronic accessibility of significant-other representations. They are chronically ready to be used even in the absence of transient priming (Andersen et al., 1995, Study 1) and when applicability-based cues are minimal (S. Chen et al., 1999) or absent (Andersen et al., 1995, Study 2). Yet both transient priming and transient applicability-based activation contribute to the phenomenon (Andersen et al., 1995), which is robust enough to persist and even to be exacerbated over time (Glassman & Andersen, 1999c).

*Significant-other-derived evaluation of the new person.* The second standard measure of transference is the degree to which participants base their evaluation of a new person on their evaluation of the significant other. Research has shown that people tend to like a new person more when he or she resembles a positively regarded significant other than a negatively regarded other—an effect that has not occurred in the no-resemblance, control condition (Andersen et al., 1996; Andersen & Baum, 1994; Baum & Andersen, 1999; Berk & Andersen, 2000; Reznik & Andersen, 2001). In accordance with the theory of schema-triggered affect (S. T. Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986), the overall evaluation of the significant other is applied to the new person. In that process, a “summary” evaluation is linked to representations in memory, so that a person classified and interpreted in terms of such a representation is regarded positively or negatively in a parallel manner. Indeed, some evidence for comparable effects in self-reported mood states exists (Andersen & Baum, 1994), although it does not always replicate (Andersen et al., 1996). We interpret these mixed results for mood as suggesting that affect (vs. evaluation) may emerge through a more nuanced process than the evocation of overall summary evaluations as evidenced in research described below. Indeed, we assume that most significant-other representations are unlikely to be exclusively positive or negative, as people may often have ambivalent feelings about their significant others. Nonetheless, our research focuses primarily on contrasting positive

and negative significant others—simply to control variability in overall affect associated with the representation. At the same time, because we maintain that no significant other is likely to be affectively “neutral,” given how laden with affect each is, we have not attempted to construct a neutral significant-other control group.

*Significant-other representations activated outside of awareness.* Because effortlessness in the activation and use of significant-other representations can speak to the potential ubiquity of the transference phenomenon, and nonconscious activation can rule out the necessity of being consciously reminded of a significant other as a precondition for transference, evidence for the nonconscious triggering of transference is important (Glassman & Andersen, 1999a). The notion that transference occurs unconsciously is also central to the clinical concept (e.g., Ehrenreich, 1989; Glassman & Andersen, 1999b; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990). We assume that transference can be triggered outside of conscious awareness and have demonstrated this using a variant of our basic paradigm in which cues about the new person were presented subliminally. In this research, participants sat at a computer terminal for a “computer game” with a partner seated elsewhere. As part of this game, they were told to focus their attention on a white dot in the center of a computer screen in order to read supraliminal stimuli presented above the dot, while simultaneously responding to random flashes on the left and right of the screen by pressing “left” or “right” on a response box. These flashes were actually subliminal descriptors, each consisting of four or fewer words, and flashed for less than 100 ms in parafoveal vision and then pattern masked (as in Bargh et al., 1986). The supraliminal stimuli were always irrelevant to the participant’s significant other. In contrast, the subliminal descriptors were derived from the participant’s own significant-other descriptors in the resemblance condition and from a yoked participant’s in the control condition.

After the game, participants completed an inference measure about their partner. As predicted, participants in the resemblance condition made stronger significant-other-derived inferences than did no-resemblance participants—even though each pair of yoked participants was subliminally exposed to the same descriptors (Glassman & Andersen, 1999a). Finally, an additional control condition ruled out self-generation effects (of the subliminally presented stimuli), and a subliminality check verified the stimuli were presented outside of awareness. The data thus show that transference can be triggered nonconsciously and does not depend on perceivers being consciously reminded of a significant other.

#### *Transference Evokes Closeness Motivation, Relationship-Protective Self-Regulation, Affect, and Behavior*

We now turn to two lines of research that speak directly to our theory of the relational self and personality. In the first, we focus on the assumption that significant-other representations are affectively and motivationally charged because of their inextricable relation to the self. Hence, when a significant-other representation designating someone to whom one feels (or once felt) close is activated, motives and feelings experienced with this other should emerge in relation to the new person. In particular, the basic human motivation to be connected with the other should be set into motion so that people are more likely to seek closeness with the new person—to approach him or her—if he or she resembles a

positively regarded rather than a negatively regarded significant other. Heightened approach tendencies under these circumstances should also mesh well with higher expectations of acceptance rather than rejection from the new person, which should also emerge. Along with these motivationally infused elements, positive emotions associated with a positive significant other should be experienced in transference, and self-regulatory processes should be set into motion by any threat to these positive experiences in an effort to fend off the threat. Finally, the significant-other-derived emotional and motivational experiences should be profound enough to influence dyadic interpersonal behavior in transference, such that the relationship with the significant other is behaviorally re-created with the new person.

In research examining these issues, participants in both the resemblance and no-resemblance conditions were exposed to descriptors about a new person derived from a positively or negatively regarded significant other, their own in the resemblance condition and a yoked participant’s in the no-resemblance condition. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these four conditions. In all conditions, participants were exposed to equal numbers of positive and negative descriptors regardless of the overall positivity or negativity of the significant other so that descriptor valence could be ruled out as an explanation for the observed effects. In each study below, the data verified that transference occurred in terms of one or both of our standard measures of transference—that is, inferences and memory about, and evaluation of, the new person.

*Activating the basic need for human connection.* We assume that the affect-laden nature of significant-other and self-with-significant-other knowledge should mean that these representations include motivational material. We have focused on the interpersonal motivation to be emotionally close with others because this basic need is likely to have particular resonance in significant-other relationships and hence should be stored in memory in the linkages between the self and the significant other. Therefore, when a representation of a positive versus a negative significant other is activated in an encounter with a new person, the desire to emotionally approach versus avoid the person, respectively, should emerge because activation of this representation should in turn elicit relevant relational-self knowledge. As predicted, research has shown that participants were more motivated to be emotionally open, and not distant, with a new person when the person resembled their own positively versus negatively toned significant other, an effect not seen in the no-resemblance condition (Andersen et al., 1996; Berk & Andersen, 2000; see also Reznik & Andersen, 2001). The need for connection is thus evoked in transference.

*Activating interpersonal expectancies for acceptance or rejection.* The need for connection with significant others makes it likely that people’s bids for acceptance and love, and the others’ responses to these bids, will be retained in memory. For example, if a significant other is harsh and rejecting, stored knowledge about this significant other and the self–other relationship will surely include expectancies for rejection and responses to this. Indeed, contingencies for acceptance and rejection with significant others may well be fundamental to significant-other relationships and to our understanding of ourselves in relation to others (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Higgins, 1989a, 1991). Our theory assumes that stored linkages between the self and significant others include such interpersonal expectancies, which should

play out in transference. As predicted, research has shown that participants have higher expectations of being accepted by a new person when the person resembles one of their own positive versus negative significant others, a pattern not observed in the no-resemblance condition (Andersen et al., 1996; see also Reznik & Andersen, 2001). It is important to note that the self–other relationship in this case runs not from the self to the significant other, as it does for the motivation to be close and connected with the other, but rather runs from the significant other to the self—as it reflects one’s perceptions of the other’s feelings—of acceptance or rejection. Together, these data reveal the bidirectionality of the relational dynamics between self and significant others as stored in memory.

*Activating facial expressions of affect.* The fact that significant-other representations are affectively laden suggests that the emotional meaning of significant-other relationships should be experienced in transference. We tapped this using a modality of emotional expression that is widely studied—facial expression. Specifically, we covertly videotaped participants’ immediate facial movements while they read each descriptor presented about a new person. Naive judges then rated the pleasantness of their facial expressions (adapted from Tesser, Millar, & Moore, 1988). As predicted, when the new person resembled the participants’ own positive significant other, rather than a negative one, their facial expressions revealed more pleasant affect; no such effect occurred in the no-resemblance condition (Andersen et al., 1996). Hence, in the resemblance condition, the overall affective tone of participants’ significant-other representations emerged in facial expression in response to each descriptor. This effect was observed averaging across both positive and negative valence in the individual descriptors.

*Activating relationship-protective self-regulation on the basis of threat cues.* As indicated, the motivation for emotional closeness and connection is activated in the context of a positive transference, as are expectations of acceptance and positive affect. Encountering negative descriptors about a new person that happen to be characteristic of a positively regarded significant other should therefore pose a threat to the positivity with which one views the significant other and the relationship, thereby precipitating a self-regulatory response. Specifically, when negative cues suggest that the new person possesses disliked qualities of a positive significant other, threat should ensue unless a compensatory process occurs that somehow softens the negative implications of the threatening information. Data from the research described above on facial affect support this very prediction (Andersen et al., 1996). Namely, in the resemblance conditions, participants responded to negative descriptors about the new person that reflected disliked characteristics of their positive significant other by showing more pleasant facial affect in response to these negative descriptors—relative to any other condition of the study and, in particular, relative to positive descriptors about this same significant other. Hence, the overall positive tone of the significant-other representation drove facial affect, such that participants’ previous evaluations of the negative characteristics encountered in this condition were reversed in their facial affect, presumably as a self-regulatory response. No such effect emerged in the no-resemblance conditions.

In our view, this finding reflects the need for connection with positive significant others—the desire to maintain a positive relationship with the significant other in spite of his or her flaws.

Being reminded (consciously or unconsciously) of negative attributes of a significant other in the context of transference may otherwise pose a threat to one’s connection needs. Finding ways to perceive these negative attributes positively may be critical in significant-other relationships and may thus be well practiced. Research on romantic relationships has shown that people often work to soften or neutralize negative attributes of their romantic partners and that recalling negative events in a romantic relationship may even result in a more positive evaluation of the partner, presumably because the need to enhance the other emerges in the face of threatening facts (e.g., Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994). The fact that positive transference experiences include experiencing a desire to be close and expectations of acceptance, rather than the desire for emotional distance and expectations for rejection as in the case of a negative transference, further suggests that this self-regulatory response in transference may serve to protect the relationship with the significant other.

*Activating significant-other-derived interpersonal behavior.* Our theory assumes that the reemergence of affective qualities of the relationship with a significant other in the context of transference is likely to be profound—and enough to influence actual interpersonal behavior in a dyad. When a perceiver’s significant-other representation is activated in a dyadic interaction with a new person, the behavioral dynamics should come to reflect the affect the individual associates with the relevant significant-other relationship. Specifically, because transference elicits positive or negative beliefs, feelings, and motives in line with the overall affect associated with the significant other, it should set into motion a cycle of behavioral confirmation (Berk & Andersen, 2000). In such cycles, perceivers’ assumptions create a corresponding social reality by eliciting behaviors from others that confirm what was previously in the perceivers’ minds (e.g., Rosenthal, 1994; Snyder, 1992). Although there are limiting conditions on when and how behavioral confirmation will occur, substantial evidence indicates that it clearly does (Snyder, 1992).

In research examining behavioral confirmation in transference, after participants were exposed to descriptors about a new person, they engaged in an audiorecorded conversation with the person, who was a total stranger and who was entirely naive about the purpose of the study (adapted from Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977; see also Andersen & Bem, 1981). Each stranger was randomly paired with each participant, and hence bore no relation to the participant’s significant other, thus constituting a more conservative test than an in situ context in which a new person might bear enough resemblance to the significant other to actually trigger transference.

Conversational behavior was assessed, focusing on the pleasantness of affect expressed in the new person’s contributions to the conversation. Independent judges rated an audiotape of these contributions, excluding the participant’s side of the conversation to be able to assess the new person’s behavior uncontaminated by the participant’s. Evidence for behavioral confirmation in transference was found, in that the new person expressed more positive affect in the conversation in the positive significant-other-resemblance condition than in the negative resemblance condition. This effect did not occur in the no-resemblance conditions. These data thus demonstrate that behavior elicited from a new person in the context of transference can be predicted from the affective quality of the relationship with the relevant significant other, with the new

person coming to respond behaviorally as the significant other typically does (or did).

*Summary.* To summarize thus far, we argue that this first set of findings speaks in multiple ways to our overriding argument that self and personality can be traced in part to transference. When a significant-other representation is activated in an encounter with a new person, the affective, motivational, and behavioral elements that characterize the self in relation to the relevant significant other are set in motion. In the context of transference, desires for closeness or distance, expectancies for acceptance or rejection, facial affect, and interpersonal behavior in the encounter with the new person are colored by the affective and motivational qualities of the relevant self–other relationship. Moreover, the data show that self-regulatory responses occur in transference to fend off threats to the relationship, which would be expected if the affective and motivational ties linking the self and significant others come into play in the transference phenomenon.

### *Transference Evokes Self-Evaluation, Self-Protective Self-Regulation, and Self-Discrepancies*

The next body of evidence addresses still more precisely our assumption that relational selves are activated and played out in transference. We have argued that the activation of a significant-other representation elicits shifts in the working self-concept toward the self with the relevant significant other. These shifts should involve both idiographic and normative elements of the relational self. As for idiographic shifts, the working self-concept should come to be characterized, at least in part, by the idiographic attributes one associates with the relational self. Moreover, one's evaluation of these changes in self-concept attributes should reflect the overall affect associated with the relationship. That is, all other things being equal, one comes to feel relatively good or bad about the self as a function of how one feels toward the significant other. Of course, as we describe later, it is possible to feel bad about the self in relation to a person one loves, with the affect experienced deriving from how the self is experienced and evaluated in the relationship.

At the same time, self-regulatory processes should occur when shifts in the working self-concept pose a threat to the self, such as when these shifts involve an influx of negative self-attributes. In this context, compensatory self-enhancement should occur—calling to the fore, as a self-protective response to a threat to the self, competing, positive aspects of the self. Indeed, these processes may be part of the common experience of, for example, many college students who go home to be with family at the holidays only to find themselves being young kids again in ways that are quite unpleasant, and thus use other more recently acquired aspects of self to try to bolster the self against fully succumbing to this unpleasant experience.

As for normative shifts in the working self-concept, we argue that the activation of a significant-other representation should in turn activate normative social constructs that characterize the self with the significant other, such as the respective interpersonal roles occupied by the self and the other, as well as the particular normative standards the other holds for the self. As a result, the affect associated with such normative self-with-other knowledge should arise in transference. For example, if the normative knowledge involves interpersonal roles, then roles should be activated in

transference, and the affective consequences assumed to occur when roles are violated should emerge if a role violation were to occur in this context. Or, if the normative knowledge involves standards that a significant other holds for oneself and one fails to meet these standards, the distinct affective consequences of activating particular standards and self-discrepancies should arise in transference along with concomitant differences in self-regulatory focus, as predicted by self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). Because self-discrepancy theory is, in part, an individual-difference model of the self and personality, evidence demonstrating an interface between our concept of the relational self and the individual differences in self-standards and self-discrepancies it specifies would further affirm the integrative nature of our theory with respect to individual differences. Below we present data supporting each of these predictions derived from our theory.

*Changes in the content of the working self-concept.* As we have argued, when a significant-other representation is activated, the working self-concept should be infused, in part, with knowledge reflecting the self-with-significant-other, or the relational self (Hinkley & Andersen, 1996; see also Ogilvie & Ashmore, 1991). In the research providing the most direct test of this hypothesis, participants in the pretest session were asked to describe themselves, overall, as a baseline measure of their working self-concept. Next, they were asked to describe a positive and a negative significant other, and then the self they are with each of these significant others—the latter serving as baseline measures of the relational selves with each significant other.<sup>6</sup> Several weeks later in the experimental session, participants were presented with descriptors about a new person who either did or did not resemble their positive or negative significant other (depending on their resemblance condition). They were then asked to generate descriptors to characterize themselves at that moment, as a measure of the idiographic content of their working self-concept. They also classified each self-descriptor as positive or negative, as a measure of idiographic self-evaluation.

Change in the working self-concept in transference was conceptualized in terms of a shift in listed content toward the relational self. Hence, the degree of overlap between the descriptors of participants' working self-concept and those of the relational self with that significant other was calculated, both at pretest and in the experiment, so that shifts in degree of overlap could be examined. As predicted, when the new person resembled participants' own significant other, thereby triggering transference, participants' working self-concept shifted toward the relevant relational self, as compared with participants in the no-resemblance condition (Hinkley & Andersen, 1996). This finding held for both positive and negative significant others. The data demonstrate that significant-other–self linkages are traversed when the significant-other representation is activated, rendering accessible those idiosyncratic aspects of the self linked with this significant other. In the context of transference, people become in part who they are with the relevant significant other, verifying the claim that variability in

<sup>6</sup> To effectively test the hypothesis that changes in self-definition and self-evaluation occur in transference, we asked participants at pretest to identify significant others with whom they typically behave and feel rather differently than they do with others, and no participant reported having any difficulty doing this.

relational selves arises as a function of contexts that trigger transference.

*Self-evaluation in the working self-concept.* As noted, content shifts in the working self-concept in transference should be accompanied by self-evaluative changes. Specifically, self-evaluation involving those aspects of the working self-concept reflecting the relevant relational self should derive from the overall affective tone of the significant-other representation, which embodies the relationship with the other as well. In the research just described, this prediction was examined by summing the positive and negative classifications that participants ascribed to each working self-concept feature they listed during the experiment—that also came to overlap with their relational-self descriptors. The analyses of this sum showed that participants evaluated these critical, overlapping working self-concept descriptors more positively (covarying out the same scores at pretest) when the new person resembled their own positive, rather than negative, significant other. This effect was not seen in the no-resemblance conditions. Hence, self-evaluative shifts occur in the context of transference in the direction of the overall affect associated with the significant other and the self–other relationship—positive shifts when the significant other was positive and relatively negative shifts when negative.

*Self-regulation in the working self-concept.* As predicted, the pattern of self-evaluative changes described above was specific to the transference condition and to the working self-concept descriptors that came to reflect (overlap with) the relevant relational self. It was not observed for those aspects of the self that did not shift toward the relational self (i.e., the nonoverlapping descriptors of the working self-concept), and this may offer a window on self-regulatory processes in the working self-concept in response to threat. Specifically, we argue that in the negative transference, when participants encountered a new person who resembled a negatively regarded significant other, the influx of negative relational-self aspects into working memory is likely to have constituted a threat to the self, which should thus elicit a self-regulatory response. In support of this, participants' self-evaluations of their nonoverlapping working self-concept descriptors (again covarying out pretest evaluation) were by far the most positive when the new person resembled one of their own negatively regarded significant others. Hence, self-evaluations of nonoverlapping self-concept descriptors showed a powerful reversal of the hit taken by the self in this condition in the form of the negative self-evaluative shifts shown in the overlapping self-descriptors. That is, in the negative transference, an overwhelming number of positively evaluated self-descriptors entered into the working self-concept, directly contrasting away from the average valence of the overlapping descriptors, bolstering the self in response. This can be understood in terms of compensatory self-enhancement—a self-regulatory response to self-threat in a negative transference encounter, arising from the influx of negative self-aspects into the working self-concept.

Overall, this evidence demonstrates that the self in relation to the significant other, defined idiographically, is activated in transference, such that the relational self becomes part of the working self-concept. In short, it provides direct evidence for our overriding argument that the self is entangled with significant others such that when transference occurs, relevant changes in the content of the self occur accordingly. The data also show that transference

instigates self-evaluative changes in the working self-concept. For self-aspects that overlap with the relational self, these changes reflect the overall affect associated with the significant other and the relationship. On the other hand, for nonoverlapping self-aspects in the case of a negative transference, a compensatory, self-protective response emerges. Compensatory responses are common in a variety of contexts (e.g., J. Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985; Steele, 1988; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Tesser, 1988), and presumably enable people to shore up positive self-conceptions, restoring security and efficacious self-regulation when the resources or resiliency to do this are intact. Furthermore, although one can argue that this evaluative contrasting away from the relational self might be a way of extricating oneself from the entanglement with the negative significant other, transference clearly does occur on the basis of negative significant-other representations, and the content of the working self-concept changes accordingly demonstrate the psychological importance of negative transference.

*Interpersonal roles, role violation, and affect.* As we have argued throughout, linkages between the self and the significant other in memory are important in our theory because these linkages, when activated in transference, should elicit changes in how one responds to others. We have also maintained that these linkages involve idiographic as well as normative knowledge reflecting typical patterns of relating with the other. To the degree that such normative forms of knowledge are in fact activated when idiographic significant-other representations are activated, it supports our assumption that these idiosyncratic representations from one's own individual life exist in a tangled web of associations (see Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987) with generic knowledge structures of the sort more typically of interest to personality and social psychologists.

Among the normative constructs that should be contained within self-with-other knowledge are the interpersonal roles that the self and the significant other occupy, which should help define the self–other relationship (see Alexander & Higgins, 1993; Baldwin, 1992; Berscheid, 1994; Bugental, 1992, 2000; Clark & Reis, 1988; Clark & Taraban, 1991; A. P. Fiske, 1992; Haslam, 1994; Mills & Clark, 1994; Sarbin & Allen, 1968; Sedikides, Olsen, & Reis, 1993). Normative role relations—such as “expert”–“novice” among parents and children, teachers and students, bosses and employees—should also define expectations, goals, and feelings in relationships, imbuing them with some of the meaning they ordinarily have (Carlson, 1981; Tomkins, 1979; see also Abelson, 1976, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977). Building on this idea, we have examined the affective consequences of experiencing a violation of expectations based on the role relationship with a significant other in the context of transference (Andersen & Baum, 1999).

Specifically, if the role relationship one shares with a positively regarded significant other is activated when the representation of the other is activated with a new person, a role violation exhibited by this new person should violate role-based expectations and thereby disrupt the positive affect that would otherwise ensue. The fulfillment or frustration of motives within a particular role relationship clearly influences affective experience (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Martin, Tesser, & McIntosh, 1993; see also Oatley & Bolton, 1985). Hence, when a new person who resembles a positive significant other occupies a role that is

incongruent with the role typically occupied by the significant other, this should produce negative mood because it signals that positive outcomes usually pursued will not be attained. By contrast, when there is role congruence in transference, affective experiences should reflect the overall affect associated with the significant other.

In the pretest session of research testing these predictions, participants described a positively regarded significant other who was an authority figure to them. Then, in the experimental session, they were exposed to descriptors about a new person who either did or did not resemble this significant other. They were also told that this new person was either an expert in a task to be done together, thereby matching the authority role of their significant other, or a novice in the task, thereby mismatching their significant other's role. After reading the descriptors about the new person, participants completed measures of self-reported mood. As predicted, the results showed that, in the context of transference, role incongruence—vis-à-vis the role of the significant other—led participants to report a negative, depressed mood state as compared with the relatively more positive mood reported by participants experiencing role congruence. This effect did not occur in the absence of significant-other resemblance, indicating that the effect was specific to the transference condition—when the role relationship should have been activated on the basis of activation of the significant-other representation.

This evidence suggests that normative knowledge reflecting the relational self—in this case, normatively defined self–other roles—is activated on the basis of significant-other resemblance in a new person. In transference, then, participants appear to have been prepared to play the same role they play (or played) with their positive significant other, so that when the role relationship was violated, negative affect arose. These data showing negative affect in a positive transference also indicate that affect in transference does not always parallel evaluation and that not all negative affect in transference elicits a self-protective, compensatory response.<sup>7</sup>

*Individual differences in self-discrepancy and affective vulnerability.* Another normative element of self–other relationships that should be represented in memory as part of linkages between self and significant others is the set of standards that significant others hold for oneself. According to self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), people's beliefs about what their significant others hope for them (ideals) or feel it is their duty or obligation to be (oughts) may be discrepant from how these others actually view them, that is, view the actual self. And when ideal standards are discrepant from the actual self, there is a vulnerability to depression and dejection-related affect, whereas when ought standards are discrepant from the actual self, there is a vulnerability to agitation-related affect.

The interface between self-discrepancy theory and our model was examined by preselecting participants on the basis of whether they had an ideal or an ought self-discrepancy (and not both) from the standpoint of one of their parents (using the Selves Questionnaire; Higgins et al., 1986). In all conditions, participants indicated they liked or loved the parent. In the experiment, ideal- and ought-discrepant participants were randomly assigned to a condition in which they learned about a new person who did or did not resemble their own parent (with no explicit reference to discrepancy-relevant information). This enabled a straightforward test of our hypothesis that the relevant self-discrepancy should

be activated when the significant-other representation is activated—on the basis of self-reported mood.

As predicted, ideal-discrepant participants showed more depressed mood when the new person resembled their own parent than they did in the no-resemblance condition. This effect did not occur among ought-discrepant participants. These data demonstrate that ideal self-discrepancies are indirectly activated among ideal-discrepant participants in the context of transference—that is, in the context that activated the mental representation of the parent in relation to whom they have the discrepancy, resulting in the predicted affective consequences.<sup>8</sup>

Evidence for the activation of ought discrepancies in transference was also found. Specifically, ought-discrepant participants showed more resentful and hostile mood when the new person resembled their own parent than they did in the no-resemblance condition (on resentment, see also Strauman & Higgins, 1988). This effect did not occur among ideal-discrepant participants, which suggests the indirect activation of ought self-discrepancies in transference. Beyond this, ought-discrepant participants in the resemblance condition also reported feeling less calm than they did in the control condition—as assessed right after they were informed that they would not actually be meeting with the new person, when all other participants were relieved and relatively calm. Again, no such effect occurred for ideal-discrepant participants.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Although it is unclear exactly why compensatory responses did not emerge in this research on role violation, it may be that participants had little practice in advance in dealing with role reversals with their significant others (and the negative affective consequences of such a role violation) and thus little practice with coping with them in a compensatory manner. This stands in contrast to the more commonly experienced forms of threat to self or relationship reported earlier. Prior practice with the threat may thus account for compensatory effects in transference, a matter that warrants future research attention.

<sup>8</sup> Although this effect did not occur in an additional condition when an explicit priming procedure was used, the effect reported still holds. The explicit prime involved statements about what the new person looks for in friends—in the ideal condition, friends that live up to his or her ideals, and in the ought condition, to his or her sense of duties and obligations. Although we do not know exactly what transpired in the priming condition, the fact that it so thoroughly dampened the reported effects raises interesting questions about the degree to which a new relationship that brings with it a new ideal standard might on occasion inhibit an ideal discrepancy associated with a past significant other, even when this significant-other representation is in fact activated in the new relationship. This is a speculative but feasible outcome. This notion also comports well with some evidence suggesting that new standards arising when one becomes a parent, for example, can override past standards (Alexander & Higgins, 1993). Thus, there is much more to be examined beyond the simple process of a new person activating a prior significant-other representation associated with a past discrepancy.

<sup>9</sup> This effect was captured because the mood measures were administered twice, as is typical in our studies, so that we can compare perceptions when the interaction is anticipated with those when it is not. Although we rarely find differences as a function of administration time, and effects observed have tended to concern self-reported evaluation (Andersen & Baum, 1994; Andersen et al., 1996; Baum & Andersen, 1999), both administration times are typically included in order to detect any variation in responding based on anticipating (or not) an imminent interaction.

*Individual differences in self-discrepancy and self-regulatory focus.* In self-discrepancy theory, the affective consequences that arise when ideal and ought self-discrepancies are activated are seen to be part of a broader self-regulatory system (Higgins, 1996a, 1996b). That is, ideal standards elicit a self-regulatory focus on positive outcomes, whereas ought standards elicit a focus on negative outcomes. It is precisely because ideal standards lead to a focus on the promotion of positive outcomes that activating discrepancies from these standards, which signals a failure to attain positive outcomes, produces dejection-related affect. Similarly, it is because ought standards orient the self toward preventing negative outcomes that agitation-related affect ensues when discrepancies from these standards are activated, which signals a failure to avoid negative outcomes. If the consequences of activating self-discrepancies ultimately reflect particular self-regulatory systems, the self-regulatory implications of activating self-discrepancies from a significant other's standpoint should emerge in transference.

To test this hypothesis, participants in the same research were asked to complete a measure of motivation. The predictions were that in the transference condition, ideal-discrepant participants, for whom a promotion self-regulatory focus should be activated, should exhibit greater approach tendencies—in the form of being more open and proactive about engaging with the new person—whereas ought-discrepant participants, for whom a prevention self-regulatory focus should be salient, should show greater avoidance tendencies. The data were in line with these predictions. Specifically, in the context of transference, ideal-discrepant individuals experienced considerably less motivation to avoid the person when they were anticipating that they would meet this person as compared with after they were informed they would not actually meet him or her (at which point promotion was no longer relevant), whereas ought-discrepant individuals experienced more avoidance motivation while anticipating the meeting than after learning it would not occur (at which point prevention was no longer relevant). This asymmetrical approach–avoidance pattern emerged only in the transference condition, suggesting that distinct self-regulatory systems were likely activated among ideal- and ought-discrepant individuals, respectively, on the activation of the relevant significant-other representation.

By capturing the role of individual differences in self-discrepancies in the phenomenon of transference, these data forge a substantive link between our theory and a more traditional individual-differences approach. Although the methods and measures of self-discrepancy theory are not the most traditional, ideal and ought standards are normatively defined in terms of categorical individual differences, even though their exact content is assumed to be idiographic. Integrating normative self-standards and self-discrepancies into our model therefore enables us to tread on more traditional ground in our effort to demonstrate the relevance of the relational self to personality.

*Summary.* To summarize, this second body of evidence shows that activation of a significant-other representation instigates shifts in the self toward the relevant relational self. These shifts involve idiosyncratic changes in the content of the working self-concept, as well as changes in self-evaluation that parallel the positivity or negativity of the self–other relationship—that is, positive self-evaluation arises in positive transference and negative self-evaluation in negative transference. The data also show that the threat to the self that occurs in a negative transference elicits

compensatory self-enhancement, with the overall working self-concept taking on a dramatically more positive self-evaluation under these circumstances than in any other condition. Hence, self-protective self-regulation occurs. Although one might argue that this self-evaluative contrast away from the self-with-the-significant-other reflects extricating from the entanglement with this negative significant other, the evidence also shows negative changes in self-evaluation and clearly demonstrates that negative transference occurs. In our view, the fact that this overall positive shift in self-evaluation in the negative transference was the most pronounced observed in the study, even though counter to the valence of the transference, indicates a profound reactivity within the entanglement rather than, in effect, disentanglement.

The evidence also demonstrates that activating a significant-other representation in transference activates normative relational knowledge associated with the significant other. Role information, in particular, is activated and has implications for how interactions are experienced. That is, with a new person in transference, a role violation results in disappointment and negative affect, presumably because it signals that goals and expectations normally linked to the role will not be realized. These findings show that negative affect can arise in a positive transference and that self-regulation in response does not always occur (or does not occur successfully) on the basis of such negative experiences.

Normative standards or prescriptive assumptions that the significant other tends to hold are also activated in transference. Hence, self-discrepancies held from a parent's standpoint are elicited when the mental representation of this parent is activated. As a result, nuanced affective responses emerge, as do shifts in self-regulatory focus, as predicted by self-discrepancy theory. In transference, dejection-related affect occurs among people with ideal self-discrepancies, and agitation-related affect occurs among those with ought self-discrepancies. Moreover, shifts in the motivation to be emotionally close to the new person occur that reflect the relevant self-regulatory focus. In short, activation of the parental representation results not only in activation of the self one is with the significant other but also in activation of knowledge about what the significant other wants from one and about how he or she views one's actual self.

### *Implications of the Evidence for Relational Selves as an If-Then Model of Personality*

Taken together, the two bodies of findings we have presented provide evidence for our key propositions regarding the relational self. They support our view that, by virtue of the emotional and motivational significance of significant others to the self, linkages are formed in memory between self and significant-other representations. Each linkage establishes a relational self, which captures the version of the self one is in relation to that significant other. When the significant-other representation is activated, this activation spreads to the associated relational self, so that the working self-concept becomes infused with aspects of this particular self, and one's evaluation of these self-aspects in turn reflects the overall evaluation of the self–other relationship along with self-regulatory shifts in self-evaluation. In addition to idiographic changes in self-definition and self-evaluation, the effects of transference also involve normative self-aspects such as interpersonal roles and self-standards that lead to shifts in affect, motivation, and

self-regulation—all reflecting the self with the significant other, even though the other is not there.

In our view, the data clearly demonstrate the emergence of relational selves in the context of transference and imply that variability in the self is determined in part by the contextual activation and use of significant-other representations. It is in this basic sense that we argue that our theory constitutes an if–then model of personality, paralleling the broader social–cognitive, interactionist model developed by Mischel and Shoda (1995). As described earlier, Mischel and Shoda argue that the *if* in each if–then relation activates an idiographic set of cognitive–affective units (e.g., encodings, feelings, goals), which gives rise to the psychological situation that then elicits the *then* in that relation. If–then relations are seen as the basic units of personality, and an individual’s overall set of if–then relations is seen as his or her unique personality signature.

In our more targeted social–cognitive framework, ifs are interpersonal situations in which a new person, by virtue of his or her resemblance to a significant other, activates the representation of this significant other, and thens are the constellation of responses reflecting the associated relational self that then emerges in relations with the new person. Thus, relational selves are the cognitive–affective units, which contain both idiographic and normative elements, that give rise to the psychological situations that underlie the broad range of thens we have measured in our research. In terms of an individual’s overall signature, we would argue that if–then relations involving relational selves are a major source of the interpersonal elements of the individual’s personality. Like the broader if–then model, our theory thus allows for variability and stability in personality responding. Variability lies in the activation of different relational selves across interpersonal contexts in which transference is triggered, whereas stability derives from the steady influence of chronically accessible significant-other representations and associated relational-self knowledge as well as from the predictability of the emergence of relational selves in the social–cognitive phenomenon of transference.

Beyond its fit with social–cognitive, interactionist views of personality, in particular Mischel and Shoda’s (1995) model, we have argued that our theory of relational selves constitutes a model of personality by virtue of its motivational underpinnings, which are basic to most broad-based theories of personality (e.g., Sullivan, 1953). In addition, our theory encompasses both idiographic and nomothetic elements, thereby forging simultaneous links to idiographic approaches to personality and to approaches that treat personality in terms of nomothetic individual differences. Finally, our theory incorporates self-regulatory processes, which are widely considered to be basic to personality functioning (e.g., Mischel et al., 1996).

### *Related Literatures: Parallels and Implications*

Our theory of the relational self and personality dovetails nicely with recent developments in several research literatures. We briefly discuss some of the implications of these developments for our theory.

*Multiple levels of the self.* Our theory is compatible with a variety of conceptual frameworks that share the critical assumption that the self is defined in part in relation to others (e.g., Aron et al.,

1991; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Breakwell, 1992; Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Deaux, 1992, 1993; Gaertner, Sedikides, & Gaetz, 1999; Higgins, 1987, 1989a; Markus & Cross, 1990; Moretti & Higgins, 1999; E. R. Smith et al., 1999; E.R. Smith & Henry, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tesser, 1988; Triandis, 1989; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997; see also Andersen et al., 1997). Despite the common focus on the social nature of the self, these frameworks vary in terms of the level or levels at which the self is conceptualized. For example, research in the tradition of social identity theory has focused on distinguishing personal and social identities, with the former referring to the self as an autonomous entity and the latter referring to the selves experienced as group memberships (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Deaux, 1992, 1993; Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Triandis, 1989; Turner et al., 1994). A newer set of theories has focused on the self in relation to specific individuals, such as significant others (e.g., Aron et al., 1991; Baldwin, 1992; S. Chen & Andersen, 1999).

Our concept of the relational self is obviously most closely akin to the latter literature. However, elsewhere we have suggested that theories focused on different levels of self-definition can be integrated in ways that include personal identity as well as the self in relation both to other individuals and to groups (see Andersen et al., 1997). From such a perspective, the self in relation to significant others would offer one level of analysis intermediate in inclusiveness between personal and social identities. Recent theoretical frameworks have, in fact, conceptualized identity in exactly this way (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sedikides & Gaertner, 2001).

Considering the connection between our concept of the relational self and other levels of self-definition raises a host of provocative issues. For example, it raises questions about the kinds of internal and external factors that determine which level of self-definition is operative at a given moment (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brewer & Weber, 1994; Simon, Pantaleo, & Mummeley, 1995; Trafimow, Silverman, Fan, & Law, 1997), and about the cues that are most likely to activate one level over another (e.g., Simon et al., 1995; Trafimow et al., 1991). Also interesting to consider are the ways in which different levels of self-definition may interact with one another (e.g., Y. R. Chen, Brockner & Katz, 1998; Seta & Seta, 1996; Tesser, 1988) and whether different levels reflect separate cognitive systems (e.g., Trafimow et al., 1991) or an integrated system from which different selves draw (e.g., Reid & Deaux, 1996). All of these questions are relevant to research on relational selves as well as to research on social identities. For example, if social identities are defined in part by specific relationships, multiple levels of identity may well be active simultaneously, and this warrants examination.

The emerging integration of multiple levels of self-definition into one framework raises interesting questions and issues regarding self-regulation as well. For example, future research needs to address likely differences between self-regulation in the service of the personal self—that is, of “me” and “mine”—from self-regulation in the service of social selves—that is, of “we” and “ours” (see Higgins, 1996d). Although personal self-regulation, as we have shown, clearly can be profoundly social in that significant others are of pressing importance in determining the apparent necessity for self-protective self-regulation, this is not self-

regulation in the service of group or collective goals but instead in the service of personal goals. Varying the referent—the personal, relational, or collective self—at issue in self-regulation may thus call into play both different means and different ends for self-regulation, and this is worthy of serious examination, because our work shows that relationship-protective self-regulation arises when the referent is the relationship. In addition, even though we have examined personal self-regulation as it relates to possible and actual selves from a significant other's standpoint, we have yet to distinguish personal self-regulation of this kind, that may be encumbered by the significant other, from that which is more intrinsic or self-determined, even if relational (e.g., Deci, 1995). Overall, future research examining such issues has the potential to further the conceptual integration of existing models of the self.

*The relational self, culture, and gender.* In some models of the self, possible cross-cultural, subcultural, and gender-based variations in self-definition have been emphasized (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Cross, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995; Triandis, 1989). Overall, these have argued that the degree to which the self is interdependent and bound up with others, as compared with the degree to which the self is independent and separate, varies as a function of culture and gender. Although we concur that interdependence and independence may vary across cultures and subcultures, and perhaps also gender, we still assume that the self is fundamentally entangled with significant others, to some extent, for all people. Regardless of culture or gender, the self and personality should be defined in part by a person's idiosyncratic set of relational selves.

We also suggest that, rather than characterize such variations in terms of overall interdependence or independence (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1988), it may be appropriate to consider such variations more specifically in terms of levels of self-definition—namely, whether the self is defined in relation to another individual or in relation to a social group, both of which would reflect a kind of interdependence. Because the self very likely exists at multiple levels, cross-cultural, subcultural, and gender differences in the self are likely to depend on the level of analysis at which they are conceived. Differences across Western and Eastern cultures in the extent to which the self is bound up with group memberships may not always parallel the degree to which the self is bound up with interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the individuality of personal identity emphasized in Western culture clearly does not preclude the self from being bound up with relationships to some degree, as we have shown in our work, nor of being linked to group memberships and social identities, as other research has suggested. Similarly, although there may be clear cross-cultural differences in the baseline prevalence of different ways of characterizing the self, there are also clear cross-cultural and subcultural variations in the prevalence of various kinds of contexts that render some aspects of the self operative relative to others. Cultural differences in the prevalence of contexts that evoke particular selves thus coexist with cultural differences in baseline perceptual tendencies (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Thus, differing contextual triggers can be teased apart from differing perceptions, and this offers a significant advance in research on cultural influences on self and identity, one also present in our paradigm. Hence, examining relational selves cross-culturally seems an increasingly promising line of inquiry.

It is our view that for most people, the self is in fact entangled at both the interpersonal level with specific others in one's life and at the collective level in relation to the social groups with which one identifies. At a cognitive level, this implies that linkages exist in memory between significant-other representations and the self, as well as between knowledge designating social categories and the self. These linkages essentially represent different forms of self-with-other knowledge, as well as differences in how idiosyncratic or normative the knowledge is. Considering the cognitive underpinnings of the social self in this way suggests that culture- and gender-based variations in the social self may reflect differences in the accessibility of different forms of self-with-other knowledge or in the prevalence of triggering contexts, or both, rather than differences in the availability of different forms per se (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brewer & Roccas, 2001; Higgins, 1989b; Higgins & May, 2001; Kitayama et al., 1997; Reid & Deaux, 1996; Trafimow et al., 1991).

Overall, then, we speculate that few, if any, limiting conditions are likely for the existence of the relational self. Even in highly individualist settings, such as those of American society, the self is not entirely independent. In this light, we find intriguing those data that suggest that the individual self has "motivational primacy" over the collective self (for a review, see Sedikides & Gaertner, 2001; see also Gaertner et al., 1999; Simon et al., 1995; cf. Y. R. Chen et al., 1998), in that threats to the individual self elicit more severe, negative reactions, for which the collective self can serve as a self-protective resource, than do similar threats to the collective self, which do not lead people to take recourse in bolstering or protecting the individual self (Gaertner et al., 1999). Although we take no stand on the primacy issue vis-à-vis the relational self, we assume the fundamental point to be that the individual self and relational selves coexist, even if one were to dominate. It is worth noting that, to our knowledge, work on the primacy of the individual self has yet to examine relational selves. We speculate that given the ubiquity of the transference phenomenon and the breadth of its consequences for the self and personality, the self in relation to significant others may carry considerable motivational weight, perhaps approaching, if not matching, the individual self. Nonetheless, we hold to the view that a model that integrates the multiple levels at which the self may exist in relation to others will ultimately be most fruitful (see Brewer & Roccas, 2001).

Finally, we underscore that we do not wish to imply in our model that any personal experiences not wrapped up with one's significant others are irrelevant to the self or to personality functioning. Indeed, considerable evidence indicates that private, internal states are important in self-perception and self-judgment (e.g., Andersen, 1984, 1987; Andersen, Lambert, & Dick, 1999; Andersen & Williams, 1985; Levine, Wyer, & Schwartz, 1994; Schwarz, 1990; see also Deci & Ryan, 1985). This evidence suggests that people take their own covert, subjective experiences very seriously indeed, by defining themselves in terms of internal, covert interpretations, feelings, and wishes. The subjective nature of construal and responding is a given in social psychology. However, in our view, this need not imply either the centrality of the individual, personal self, or a lack of importance of relations with others. In fact, significant others are essential in the formation of people's private, internal responses and the various constructs they ultimately use to interpret their experience (see also Kelly, 1955), implying an interplay between individual and interpersonal

knowledge (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Wegner, 1995) in the development of self (Harter, 1999; Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998).

### Concluding Remarks

We have presented an interpersonal social–cognitive theory of the self and personality that is grounded in the phenomenon of transference. The theory posits that individuals possess multiple selves in relation to the various significant others in their lives, each linked in memory with a particular significant other. It is because linkages exist between the self and significant-other representations that when a significant-other representation is activated in an encounter with a new person, associated self-with-significant-other knowledge is set into motion. As a result, the relevant relational self comes into play, as manifested in the individual's emotional, motivational, and behavioral responses in the interpersonal encounter. Different relational selves thus unfold dynamically across interpersonal contexts. It is in this regard that our view of relational selves can be conceptualized in if–then terms, whereby ifs are interpersonal situations in which transference is triggered, and thens are the manifestations of the relational self that emerge in these situations. We contend that an individual's overall repertoire of relational selves is an influential source of his or her interpersonal patterns and, as such, of his or her personality. Our theory of the relational self can thus be seen as an everyday instantiation of the broader, social–cognitive viewpoint on personality.

Overall, we propose a conceptualization of the self and personality that is fundamentally interpersonal—focusing on the self in relation to specific significant others. Although we do not mean to imply that there is nothing to the self beyond the interpersonal, or that there are no cultural or other differences in the extent to which significant-other relationships shape the self, we regard significant-other relationships as basic to self-experience and argue that they provide the contexts in which much of self-knowledge is derived and thus serve as guideposts for self-definition and self-evaluation in memory. Of course, many pressing questions are yet to be addressed in this research involving, for example, any cultural or subcultural differences that may exist, possible troublesome or pathological consequences, and even the most positive of consequences that may emerge, such as, perhaps, a greater capacity for empathy when a new person reminds one of a significant other about whom one cares or for whom one has cared. But the data clearly suggest that basic needs relevant to one's significant other arise in transference, as does self-regulation.

The evidence also clearly shows that transference occurs for both positive and negative significant others. Moreover, because self-protective self-regulation is provoked by a negative transference, presumably to ward off the threat to the self it poses, this suggests the evocative emotional power of the negative transference context. Our pursuit of questions about differences between negative and positive transference experiences, of course, may lead one to wonder if there is not something rather artificial about classifying significant-other representations as positive or negative. All significant-other representations are likely to be fairly complex and may contain numerous contradictory aspects, just as one's self-representations do (Sande, Goethals, & Radloff, 1988).

Hence, we can assume this complexity may translate into some amount of ambivalence for many significant others, suggesting that subtle variations in where one places a significant other on the valence continuum may well matter somewhat less than whether or not the person is (or has been) significant. In fact, the emotional suffering one may experience in transference can clearly arise in a positive transference, just as it can in a negative transference—for example, when a positive significant other is linked to self-discrepancies or when role violations are experienced with a new person. In short, we believe that this model and the evidence have implications both for vulnerability and for resilience in the relational self (Andersen et al., 2002).

On another level, future work would do well to examine our underlying assumption that an individual's repertoire of significant-other representations and self-with-significant-other knowledge can be expanded as new people become significant. The evidence suggests that people can form new significant-other relationships with people beyond their family of origin and that transference occurs on the basis of a wide variety of significant-other representations. Presumably when one feels fondness toward someone and begins to invest emotionally and motivationally in the person, in small and then in larger ways, one sets the stage for forming a significant-other representation designating this person. New aspects of self are likely to then be developed or enhanced on the basis of the new relationship, perhaps even self-aspects not previously operative with any prior significant other. This possibility implies that the self can be extended in positive directions on the basis of newly formed relationships and thus offers some hope for changing counterproductive patterns and building desired identities—with new friends, colleagues, mentors, or romantic partners.

In conclusion, the relational self and personality are embodied, at least in part, in transference—a phenomenon that tracks idiographic variability in the self and personality, while also reflecting continuity, in accordance with well-established social–cognitive principles. Transference occurs by means of the activation of mental representations of significant others, which accordingly evokes the associated self-with-significant-other—or the relational self. This system of cognitive–affective units, composed of significant-other and relational-self knowledge, defines variability and stability in our if–then model of the relational self and personality. It suggests that significant others are crucial to self-definition and its vicissitudes as well as to affective and motivational experience, self-regulation, and interpersonal behavior.

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Received October 29, 1999

Revision received September 10, 2001

Accepted September 11, 2001 ■

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### Clarification on Goldstein and Gigerenzer (2002)

Due to circumstances that were beyond the control of the authors, the studies reported in “Models of Ecological Rationality: The Recognition Heuristic,” by Daniel G. Goldstein and Gerd Gigerenzer (*Psychological Review*, 2002, Vol. 109, No. 1, pp. 75–90) overlap with studies reported in “The Recognition Heuristic: How Ignorance Makes Us Smart,” by the same authors (in *Simple Heuristics That Make Us Smart*, 1999, G. Gigerenzer & P. M. Todd, Eds., pp. 37–59, Oxford University Press) and with studies reported in “Inference From Ignorance: The Recognition Heuristic” (D. G. Goldstein, 1998, in *Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, pp. 407–411, Erlbaum). In addition, Figure 3 in the *Psychological Review* article (Goldstein & Gigerenzer, 2002) was originally published in the book chapter (Goldstein & Gigerenzer, 1999) and should have carried a note saying that it was used by permission of Oxford University Press.

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