CHAPTER 1

Motivating Responsiveness

Why a "Smart Relationship Unconscious"?

Relationships are hard. A quick perusal of titles in the self-help section of any bookstore reveals just how difficult and taxing relationships can be. Titles promise guides for communicating with a spouse who is other-planetary by virtue of gender, strategies for prevailing in conflict, and tricks for keeping the embers of one's sex life from burning out. Do people really need this much tutelage? Are relationships really this complex to manage?

Yes and no. Think for a moment about everything couples do together. Imagine the lives of two busy lawyers, Ron and Gayle, coping with an infant and an energetic toddler. Their marriage has all the potential stresses and strains of running a small, understaffed company. On the factory floor, they change diapers, shop to put food in the fridge, cajole their toddler to eat his meals, do the laundry, juggle play-dates with work, mow the lawn, and balance trips to the doctor's office with court dates. In the offices of upper management, they manage relations between the employees—in their case, between their young children, between each other, and between themselves and outside friends and family. In juggling these executive roles, they can be called on to provide emotional

support, offer career counsel, quash conflicts with in-laws, tolerate each other's faults, and mesh Gayle's penchant for beer and football with Ron's proclivity for fine wine and foreign films. They depend on each other in so many situations that, inevitably, some will provide opportunities to disappoint each other. Gayle might be tempted to work rather than take the time to relax with Ron; Ron might be tempted leave too many of the diapers and too much of the cajoling to Gayle; Gayle might express her irritation with Ron's mother, much to his chagrin. Despite such potential for conflict, Ron and Gayle generally find ways of being responsive to each other's needs. Ron often takes on household responsibilities that Gayle finds onerous, he usually listens when Gayle wants to talk (and vice versa), and Gayle sacrifices football for Ron's subtitles often enough to make him feel appreciated and valued.

Relationships scholars agree that mutually responsive behavior is key to satisfying and stable relationships (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Responsiveness is ascribed this lofty status in large part because partners are *interdependent*. Interdependence refers to a structural feature of relationships: Partners influence and constrain one another's actions (Kelley, 1979). What Gayle does constrains how happy Ron can be with his outcomes, and what Ron does constrains how happy Gayle can be with her outcomes.

Because partners are interdependent, any relationship can be broken down into a series of situations involving social coordination. In each of these situations, one partner has a need or goal that he or she cannot reach on his or her own, and the other partner must adjust his or her own behavior to accommodate it (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). In any relationship, partners typically coordinate their actions at three different levels of interdependence (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Holmes, 2002):

1. Life tasks
2. Personal preferences and personality
3. Relationship goals

First, couples are interdependent at the level of life tasks. To live together happily, Ron and Gayle must ensure that someone predictably cooks, someone competently cleans, someone caringly tends to their children's needs, and someone promptly pays the bills. Second, couples are interdependent at the level of personal preferences and personality. To live together happily, Ron and Gayle must ensure that his introverted preference for solitude respects her gregarious desire to socialize. They must also mesh Gayle's forthright tendency to be blunt in her criticisms with

the necessity of protecting Ron's easily bruised feelings. Third, couples are interdependent at the level of relationship goals. To live together happily, Ron and Gayle must adjust his wistful desire for a traditional family to accommodate her career, and Gayle must adjust her preference for independent hobbies with Ron's desire for shared leisure pursuits.

WHY A BOOK ON MOTIVATING RESPONSIVENESS?

Although mutual responsiveness is widely regarded as the holy grail of relationship life, exactly how mutually responsive behaviors emerge (or fail to emerge) in relationships remains a mystery. Our goal in writing this book was to unravel this puzzle. In the pages that follow, we detail the elements of a new theory of interdependence that we developed to explain why and how mutually responsive (and nonresponsive) interaction patterns emerge in relationships. The theory we articulate revolves around the following premise: People's general working models of relationships contain the unconscious "know-how" to motivate mutually responsive behavior.

We use the term *interdependent mind* to refer to the cognitive representation of this relationship know-how in memory (Murray & Holmes, 2009). Interpersonal scholars characterize relationship knowledge as working models (Baldwin, 1992; Collins & Read, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). These working models govern how people experience the self in relation to others (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Baldwin, 1992). For instance, Andersen and Chen (2002) contend that aspects of people's self-conceptions (e.g., traits and goals) are tied to their representations of significant others in memory. Such ties, they reason, control behavior in interpersonal situations. Similarly, Baldwin (1992) argued that working models include beliefs about the characteristics of the self in specific contexts, beliefs about the characteristics of others in these same contexts, and "if–then" or procedural scripts that specify the relation between the self and others (e.g., "If I depend on my spouse for support, then he or she will be comforting").

Following in this social–cognitive tradition, we conceptualize the *interdependent mind* as a system of interconnected procedural or if–then rules for interaction within adult romantic relationships. These unconscious rules coordinate partner interaction by linking specific features of the situation (i.e., "if Ron does *X*") to correspondent ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving (i.e., "then Gayle does *Y*"). For instance, one rule links Ron's good humor (i.e., "if") to Gayle's contingent tendency to seek his social support and counsel (i.e., "then") after a difficult day in court.

Another such rule links Gayle's criticism of Ron's introversion (i.e., "if") to his contingent tendency to withdraw from her in social situations (i.e., "then"). As we will see, these if–then rules function to coordinate mutually responsive partner interactions by matching specific features of the situation partners face to congruent behavior. In so doing, these if–then rules unconsciously function to make the best of specific interdependent situations.

This book has three main features that distinguish it from prior writing on close relationship dynamics. First, it articulates a new model of interdependence to explain how patterns of mutual responsiveness (and nonresponsiveness) develop in relationships. This model of the interdependent mind is based in the classic arguments John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959) advanced about the power of situations, but it also incorporates 21st-century knowledge about the power of the unconscious in directing behavior (Bargh, 2007). Second, this book reveals how breaking down partner interaction into underlying if–then rule structure can explain why some relationships succeed while others fail. From our perspective, relationships do not fail primarily because men are from Mars and women are from Venus, because partners are short on emotional intelligence, or because partners lack the skills to "fight fair." Instead, relationships fail because the if–then rules that become one's unconscious habit constrain responsiveness and thereby limit just how rewarding interacting with one's partner can be. Third, this book articulates a pivotal role for partner compatibility in relationships. The immense popularity of Internet services that promise compatible partners suggests that people fervently want to find a partner who understands and shares their interests, values, and personality. However, few people actually find such a compatible match (Lykken & Tellegen, 1993). Moreover, no existing scholarship articulates what it means for partners to be compatible or to explain what effects compatibility might have on relationships. This book does both.

When we began our collaborative work 20 years ago, we had no way of anticipating we would end up here. We started our research together talking about Brickman's (1987) book on commitment. Through this, we discovered a shared fascination with the motivational machinations that keep people in happy and committed relationships. For years we happily went about our research enterprise limiting our theorizing and research to the realm of the conscious mind. While we were doing business as usual, social psychology changed radically, with the advent of empirical research on the automatic regulation of social behavior first appearing in the early 1990s (see Bargh, 2007, for a review). It took a few years, but we finally caught the spark. At its core, the theory we develop in this

book assumes that we cannot uncover how relationships work simply by asking people to complete self-report scales (or even by observing their behavior). Instead, it's only by looking at the operation of the unconscious in conjunction with the conscious that we can begin to understand why some relationships thrive while others falter.

In offering this book, we hope to reach academic researchers, clinicians working in the field, students curious about the scientific study of relationships, and the interested layperson hoping to find some relationship advice. Given the diversity of this audience, we offer both empirical data to support our arguments and examples to illustrate our main points. In weaving together the empirical and the hypothetical, we bring the marriages of four fictional couples to life: Ron and Gayle (whom you have already met), Harry and Sally, Hector and Helena, and Gunter and Lastri. Table 1.1 presents a thumbnail sketch of each of these couples. We fill in these sketches—articulating the nature of their compatibilities and incompatibilities in life tasks, personality, and relationship goals—as we proceed. Each of these couples will end up being responsive (and not

TABLE 1.1. Introducing Our Couples

Couple	Basic demographics	Life task preferences	Personality preferences	Relationship goal preferences
Ron and Gayle	African American Lawyers Two young children	Stay tuned . . .	Gayle more gregarious.	Stay tuned . . .
Harry and Sally	White Mechanic/customer service officer Three children, eldest 17	Stay tuned . . .	Stay tuned . . .	Stay tuned . . .
Hector and Helena	Hispanic Factory worker/ homemaker Three young children Catholic Economically stressed	Stay tuned . . .	Stay tuned . . .	Stay tuned . . .
Gunter and Lastri	Indonesian PhD student/ homemaker One toddler	Stay tuned . . .	Stay tuned . . .	Gunter wants another baby; Lastri wants to return to school.

responsive) to one another's needs in different ways. They will also end up more or less happy. In telling their stories, we use our model of the interdependent mind both to anticipate how each of these couples met their respective fates and to describe the circumstances that might have led them to experience a different relationship end.

We already introduced Ron and Gayle. They are a dual-career, African American couple coping with a young family. Ron and Gayle spent the initial years of their marriage in relative bliss, enjoying the spoils of their respective legal careers. They worked late, got promoted often, lived lavishly, and traveled to exotic locales to escape stress. Three years ago that changed. First they had a son, a happy but unexpected event; recently, they welcomed an infant daughter. Now they struggle to find the time to balance work with family, live frugally to save for college tuitions, and limit travel to often stressful trips to visit grandparents.

Later we will meet Harry and Sally, a white couple coping with the many challenges facing families entrenched in the middle class. Harry is a mechanic at a local automotive shop. Sally is a part-time customer service officer at a local bank. They have three children. Their youngest is 3; their eldest is 17. Their middle child has recently been diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Sally spends most of her week squeezing her bank hours in between the demands of managing their household and shuttling their children between daycare, school, and soccer games. Harry spends most of his week wishing he had more time for his children and hoping he hasn't done something to disappoint Sally.

Hector and Helena face many of the same life tasks as Harry and Sally—but their challenges are greater still. Each the child of Hispanic immigrant parents, Hector and Helena had few privileges growing up. Hector managed to go to trade school, but Helena never finished high school. Hector now works as an assembly-line worker in an auto plant and he worries about his job security. Helena supplements his salary by babysitting for their neighbors when she can. Even though a shared Catholic faith cements their marriage, they don't spend as much time alone together anymore, constantly struggle to pay the rent, and Helena clips coupons every week to stretch their earnings far enough to support three very young children.

Gunter and Lastri, who married through the matchmaking of their parents, face a different set of challenges. They are recent immigrants from Indonesia. Gunter is an engineer and relocated to the United States to pursue an advanced degree while working full-time at an upstart biotech firm. Because Gunter works such long hours, Lastri tends to their toddler and manages their household full-time. Although this traditional

division of labor has made it easy for them to coordinate their goals in the past, Lastri has been questioning this arrangement as of late. She thinks she might want to return to school herself. Gunter still is not sure how he feels about the turn of events, but he would like to have another baby, and he is reasonably sure that his parents would not approve of Lastri sacrificing time at home with their child to pursue her education. At this point in their marriage, uncertainty seems to be the only certainty.

As these examples attest, our hope is to offer a new model of interdependence that is general enough to explain close relationship dynamics in different economic and sociocultural contexts. No doubt future research will prove some of the hypotheses and arguments we advance incomplete (if not altogether wrong), but in advancing the ideas, we hope to spur new thinking and further research. In terms of general organization, this book is divided into two main sections, one more conceptual, the other more applied. The first two-thirds of the book outline the conceptual model and its empirical support. We do this in progressive stages. In the remainder of this chapter, we set up the basic elements of our model. We start by describing why it can be difficult for partners to be responsive. Then we describe the essential elements of the relationship "know-how" needed to motivate mutuality in responsiveness. We present the model formally in Chapter 2. In Chapters 3 through 8, we break the model down into its constituent elements. In the last third of the book (Chapters 9 through 12), we outline applications of the model. (We provide more detail about the contents in the "Book Overview" section at the end of this chapter.)

WHY RESPONSIVENESS IS HARD: THE TWIN TEMPTATIONS OF SELF-INTEREST

Some situations make it easy to be responsive. Being responsive to a partner's goals is easy in situations where partner interests converge. Imagine that Ron's preference for doing car maintenance converges with Gayle's distaste for it. In such a situation, Ron does not even need to recognize Gayle's preferences to be responsive to her needs. He can meet her needs simply by acting in his own interest and taking care of the car maintenance himself. But here's the problem. Behavioral coordination is going to be hard in many of the situations couples face. Couples are interdependent in so many different ways that at least some incompatibilities or conflicts of interest arise for even the happiest and most compatible couples. We use the term *conflict of interest* to refer to a "mixed-motive" situation (Kelley et al., 2003). Such situations offer the potential for mutual

gain (if partners put aside self-interested concerns to be either selfish or self-protective), but also the risk of potential loss (if one or both partners accede to the temptation to pursue self-interested concerns).

The number and severity of the conflicts of interest that partners face depend on their compatibility at each of the levels of interdependence they share. Consider the tasks life imposes on a couple. At this level of interdependence, the likelihood of a conflict of interest arising depends on the task itself and the degree of correspondence between partners' task preferences (Kelley, 1979). Some life tasks are objectively more appealing than others. Popping dirty clothes into the washing machine is not the most enticing activity. However, it is probably more appealing than driving endlessly around the neighborhood at 3 A.M. trying to lull a colicky infant to sleep. Both tasks need to be done, but coordinating responsibility for the colicky infant is likely to generate more conflict because being responsive to a partner's needs for sleep requires sacrificing one's own sleep. Some life tasks are also objectively more difficult for some couples. If money is abundant, deciding whose material needs to prioritize is not likely to be a source of conflict. If Ron loses his job, budgeting household finances is likely to require at least one partner to sacrifice because there is not enough money to go around. The available options in such life tasks also generate more or less conflict because of the attitudes and preferences each partner brings to the relationship. If Gayle prefers being a night owl, being the 3 A.M. chauffeur may be an easy sacrifice for her to make. If both Ron and Gayle need to arrive early at work, deciding who gets to sleep may be a source of great contention. Thus, complementary interests can make it easier to be responsive in specific situations because one partner finds the tasks the other finds onerous to be desirable. Couples who find the same tasks onerous are going to face more situations where responsiveness is hard because it requires more personal sacrifice.

Next consider the personal attitudes, preferences, goals, and personality each partner brings to the relationship. At this level of interdependence, the likelihood of conflicts of interest arising depends on the compatibility or correspondence between partners' personal attitudes, preferences, goals, and personality (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Kelley, 1979). In some domains, being similar minimizes conflict and makes coordination easier. If Ron and Gayle are both disavowed Baptists, being responsive to one another's goals for Sunday morning activities is easy because their personal goals converge in a shared desire not to go to services. However, it would be much harder for Ron to respond to Gayle's needs for them to go to church if he would rather sleep in. If Ron and Gayle are both outgoing and sociable, it will also be easy for them to coordinate their shared

goals to spend some of their time together with friends. It would be more difficult for Ron to meet Gayle's needs to socialize if he prefers solitude to parties. In other domains, being opposite minimizes conflict and makes coordination easier. It is easier for Ron to meet Gayle's need to exercise her controlling and compulsive nature if he is an easygoing person who really does not mind being bossed around. It would be much harder for him to meet Gayle's need to be controlling if he would rather control her. In that case, Gayle's exercise of her dominance would thwart Ron's capacity to be his controlling self.

Now consider the relationship goals couples need to negotiate. At this level of interdependence, the number of conflicts of interest likely to arise depends on the extent to which partners aspire to convergent or divergent goals for their relationships. Here, convergent goals make coordination easy. If both Ron and Gayle want to increase the amount of time they spend together, they can easily meet each other's needs for greater closeness. However, if Ron wants to start trying to have a third child at the time Gayle wants to devote more energy to her career, greater sacrifices will be necessary for both of them to meet their relationship goals.

The many ways in which partners are interdependent make incompatibilities and conflicts of interest inevitable. Because both onerous and pleasurable tasks need to be done, Ron and Gayle will encounter specific situations where they would both rather play with their toddler than vacuum and do the dishes. Because they are different people, Ron and Gayle will encounter situations where they are going to want different things. In fact, the idea that birds of a feather flock together does not quite capture the romantic reality. Partners do match on basic dimensions such as age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and basic attitudes (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). However, on many of the preference and personality dimensions that control behavioral interactions in close relationships, mismatches are just as common as matches. In a large study of twins and their spouses, Lykken and Tellegen (1993) examined whether couples sorted themselves out on the basis of personality. The authors reasoned that if people selectively choose partners who are a good personality fit, the personalities of real couples should be more similar than the personalities of couples the authors randomly paired. What they found was astonishing. Real couples were no more similar in personality than random couples. This element of randomness in romantic choice ensures that couples will experience conflicts because extroverts are paired with introverts, neat freaks are paired with slobs, and obsessive planners are paired with free spirits. In fact, conflict is inevitable even for those couples lucky enough to choose more compatible partners and face more easy than hard tasks. Because

social perception is biased, Ron and Gayle are also going to make mistakes discerning exactly what each other actually wants out of specific situations (Griffin & Ross, 1991). Sometimes they will see conflicts where none exactly exist because emotions in the heat of the moment and stereotypes about what men and women want can bias perception in ways that exaggerate any differences.

Risk and the Twin Temptations of Self-Interest

Conflicts of interest make it hard to be responsive because these situations make *risk* a central facet of interdependent life (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). In reaching out to a partner to meet their needs, people have to risk not having their basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs met. Why would that be the case?

Imagine that it is Gayle's turn to take 3 A.M. chauffeur duty, but she's due in court early the next morning. In this situation, she needs Ron to sacrifice his own need for sleep so she can get a good night's rest in advance of her appearance. However, asking Ron to take an extra turn at chauffeur duty leaves her vulnerable to his refusal. Such a situation is risky because Gayle cannot get what she wants without Ron's help, and Ron has a real reason not to cooperate because he would rather sleep than drive. Now imagine that Gayle just got reprimanded at work, putting a promotion in jeopardy. Disclosing her failure to Ron is risky because he might ignore her real need for social support and instead chastise her for her failure to get the raise if he's upset at the prospect of needing to put in more work hours himself.

The self-interested concerns Gayle and Ron each bring to these situations create risk and present a major barrier to responsiveness. We use the term *self-interest* to refer to twin motivations: (1) one partner's motivation to be selfish and (2) the other partner's corresponding motivation to self-protect. In each of these situations, Ron faces the temptation to pursue his own goals without regard for Gayle's welfare. He can selfishly refuse to chauffeur to preserve his own sleep and he can chastise Gayle for her job failure to vent his own frustration. Consequently, in each of these situations, Gayle faces the temptation to protect herself from being vulnerable to Ron's lesser nature. To keep herself safe, she can decide just to suffer through her turn at chauffeuring or she could decide to confess her failures to her friends instead of to Ron. For Ron to meet Gayle's needs for a chauffeuring reprieve and a sympathetic ear, each of them must set aside their own specific self-interested concerns. That is, she must be willing

to ask and he must be willing to give. If either of them fails to do so, her needs will go unmet.

This reality informs the central premise of this book: Coordinating patterns of mutual responsiveness to need requires mechanisms for trumping self-interested concerns on each partner's part. To coordinate mutually responsive behavior, Ron's temptation to be selfish needs to be tempered when Gayle sets aside her motivation to protect against his exploitation; similarly, Gayle's temptation to be selfish must be tempered when Ron sets aside his motivation to self-protect. When this happens, partner interactions can be fluid and easy.

MOTIVATING RESPONSIVENESS: FIVE ELEMENTS TO RELATIONSHIP KNOW-HOW

The model of the interdependent mind we formalize in Chapter 2 revolves around the following assumption that tempering partners' self-interested temptations in a way that promotes mutually responsive behaviors requires effective *motivation-management*. When partner motivations are effectively managed, Gayle generally solicits the type of care Ron is willing to provide and she also provides the type of care that Ron needs. Managing partner motivations is central to motivating responsiveness, because it provides a mechanism for keeping the goal conflict inherent to conflict of interest situations from thwarting action. Namely, in putting her outcomes in Ron's hands, Gayle stands to gain the benefits of his care, but she also risks being hurt and disappointed by his nonresponsiveness. Essentially, conflicts of interest put the fundamental goals to approach what is good and to avoid what is bad in opposition (Elliot & Church, 1997; Gable, 2005; Higgins, 1998). In relationship terms, these situations put the goal to connect to the partner in conflict with the goal to self-protect against rejection. Because people cannot act with any direction in such a state of indecision or ambivalence (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999), behaving responsively requires the know-how to resolve this goal conflict. There are five elements that are basic to this relationship know-how:

1. Trust
2. Goal direction
3. Commitment reciprocity
4. Efficient but flexible goal implementation
5. Suitability for the relationship circumstance

Trust

For Gayle to know when it is safe to approach Ron, she needs to know when putting her outcomes in his hands is likely to be more or less risky. For this reason, gauging the partner's responsiveness is central to our model. The inherent difficulty of disambiguating the partner's motivations is probably obvious: It is impossible for anyone to have direct insight into the contents of another person's consciousness (Griffin & Ross, 1991). Gayle cannot know Ron's motivations because she cannot insert herself into his mind to discern where the truth lies. Instead, she must rely on an indirect barometer. Trust functions as this barometer.

Gayle's level of trust in Ron captures her expectations about the strength of his commitment to her, and thus the strength of his motivation to respond to her needs (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). As traditionally defined, trust involves meta-perspective taking, that is, discerning how the partner feels about oneself (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Through her level of trust in Ron, Gayle can discern what she can safely risk asking of him. Our model of the interdependent mind's structure assumes that five interrelated if–then rules govern Gayle's expectations about the strength of Ron's commitment to her.

These five rules comprise the if–then rules for trusting. These rules tell Gayle when it is reasonable to expect Ron to be responsive. They basically set the conditions that warrant Gayle's worthiness of Ron's care. In so doing, they tell Gayle when she needs to be vigilant and when she does not. For instance, one of these rules links Gayle's worry that she is too competitive for Ron to her occasional concerns about his rejection. Another rule links Gayle's belief that she's kinder and more intelligent than Ron's college girlfriend to her general confidence in his acceptance. By linking specific conditions (e.g., being kinder and more intelligent, being too competitive) to more or less trusting expectations, these rules help signal risk. They help Gayle fill in the blanks in conflicts of interest by revealing when Ron is safe to approach and when putting her outcomes in his hands is likely to yield the fulfillment versus disappointment of her needs. In so doing, they govern Gayle's chronic need to be vigilant for the possibility of Ron's nonresponsiveness.

Goal Direction

The second element of people's unconscious relationship know-how involves two if–then rules that provide a general guide for action. These

rules answer the basic question: Should I stay or should I go? In technical terms, these rules turn the risks Gayle perceives in a specific conflict of interest into a general direction for her actions. In so doing, these rules orient Gayle toward approaching situations that offer the hope of Ron's responsiveness and avoiding those situations that threaten his nonresponsiveness. One rule links Gayle's anticipation of Ron's acceptance to her desire to approach good outcomes. The other rule links Gayle's anticipation of Ron's rejection to her desire to avoid bad outcomes. These rules link risk appraisal to directed action by using the interpersonal goals Gayle adopts in specific conflicts of interest as an intermediating force. In particular, the "approach" rule links Gayle's expectations of Ron's acceptance (i.e., low risk) to her goal to connect to him (i.e., approach Ron). The "avoid" rule links Gayle's expectations of Ron's rejection and nonresponsiveness (i.e., high risk) to her goal to self-protect against his possible rejection (i.e., avoid Ron).

Commitment Reciprocity

Fluid and responsive interactions involve the goals of both partners. To reap the best outcomes Gayle needs to take the risk of putting her outcomes in Ron's hands, and Ron needs to forego the temptation to best his own personal outcomes. Therefore, fluid, mutually responsive interaction involves coordinating the interpersonal goals partners jointly pursue. For mutually responsive interactions to develop, both partners must be equally willing to set aside self-interested concerns (Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999). Any asymmetry in their willingness to do so invites coordination difficulties (Drigotas et al., 1999; Sprecher, Schmeeckle, & Felmless, 2006). Imagine the difficulty of coordinating mutually responsive interaction patterns in a marriage where Gayle is more committed to Ron than Ron is committed to her. Being less invested in the relationship gives Ron greater power and disproportionate license to behave selfishly and disappoint Gayle. Not needing Gayle as much as she needs him frees him from having to care about her reactions to his behavior. In such a marriage Ron would face the constant temptation to be selfish, and Gayle would faces the constant need to protect against his possible exploitation. Waller (1938) described this adaptive problem in terms of the "principle of least interest." With unequal commitment, Waller reasoned, the power to be selfish resides disproportionately with the person who benefits least from the relationship (i.e., most powerful), and the demand to sacrifice falls largely on the person who benefits most (i.e., least powerful).

Fortunately, people's unconscious relationship know-how also includes if–then rules for minimizing the chance of such power imbalances developing in the first place. Our model of the structure of the interdependent mind posits three further "if-then" rules for keeping Gayle's commitment to Ron commensurate with Ron's commitment to Gayle (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992). As traditionally defined, commitment captures the strength of one's motivation to respond to the partner's needs. Commitment regulates the motivation to behave selflessly or selfishly (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). In knowing his commitment to Gayle, Ron has a heuristic ready to tell him whether Gayle is valuable enough to him in the long term for him to take over her chauffeur duty or listen sympathetically to her failures. Reciprocity in commitment eases interactions by putting partners on a level playing field where each is similarly motivated to be responsive to the other's needs.[1] These three rules follow.

Matching Commitment to Trust

Because Gayle cannot see directly into Ron's head (or heart), her trust in Ron functions as her "best guess" as to the strength of his commitment. One of the if–then rules for coordinating commitment across partners makes trust a stepping stone for commitment. In particular, this if–then rule makes the expression of one's own commitment contingent on trust (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). How might such a rule coordinate partners' goals in conflicts of interest? Being more committed means that Gayle puts more of her outcomes (whether practical or symbolic) in Ron's hands. She might depend on Ron for his help with child care, seek his advice about a work-related stressor, forgive his caustic comment about her new hairstyle, or take on extra child care responsibilities so he can have more time to work. These behaviors leave her vulnerable to disappointment (should he not be similarly responsive), but she can minimize such risks by extending herself only when she has good reason to trust him to be responsive. In other words, the interpersonal mind can keep Gayle's commitment (i.e., dependence) calibrated to Ron's likely commitment by motivating her to risk only as much commitment as she anticipates Ron will extend (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). But the success of such a matching rule assumes a perfect world in which Gayle's trust in Ron and Ron's commitment to Gayle never wavers (and never errs). Neither of these possibilities is likely to be the case. To coordinate partner commitment, the interpersonal mind also has two further rules for avoiding the problems that could arise if trust were misplaced or commitment derailed.

Ensuring Trust Is Not Misplaced

No matter how responsive Ron is in general, Gayle will find herself in situations where she needs something from him that he is not inclined to provide. In such situations, Gayle's unconscious relationship know-how motivates her to take some kind of remedial action to make Ron "owe" her. By putting Ron in her debt, Gayle effectively leverages the power to motivate Ron to do what he does not necessarily want to do. Imagine that Ron has no desire to take the children to the park on a Sunday afternoon to indulge Gayle's penchant for watching a football game. If Gayle wants to ensure her uninterrupted viewing, she needs to take some kind of pre-emptive action to motivate Ron to indulge her. Therefore, the interpersonal mind contains an if–then rule for putting subtle pressure on him— one that ensures he has little choice but to be responsive. Making sure that he "owes" her—by laundering his clothes in the morning and making his favorite dinner in the evening—could provide just the motivation he needs. Once he's become more dependent on her, he loses some of his power to antagonize her, a state of being that keeps his motivation to be responsive in check with Gayle's willingness to put her outcomes in his hands. In this state, he might readily head off to the park with children in tow and let her watch football in peace to ensure that he will have clothes to wear and a meal to eat the next day. In this way, Gayle's efforts to leverage Ron's dependence on her give Ron all the more reason to be responsive in situations where his commitment to being responsive is starting to flag (Murray, Aloni, et al., 2009).

Ensuring Commitment Is Not Derailed

No matter how responsive Gayle is in general, she will also find herself in situations where Ron needs something from her that she is not inclined to provide. Such situations might peak at moments when Ron's desire to try a new wine interferes with her enjoying her beer at day's end. In such situations, people's store of procedural knowledge also contains a back-up rule for motivating people to do things that they just do not want to do for their partner (Murray, Holmes, et al., 2009). After all, commitment inevitably imposes undesirable costs or restrictions on one's own goal pursuits. Married to someone who prefers subtitles to second downs, Gayle will miss games or plays she was just dying to see. Because Ron cannot help but thwart some of Gayle's independent goal pursuits, the mind needs a mechanism in place to motivate Gayle to be responsive to Ron when petty annoyances and frustrations threaten to derail her commitment (Murray,

Holmes, et al., 2009). By making Ron more valuable to her precisely when he thwarts her goals, this if–then rule gives Gayle renewed motivation to be responsive, keeping her commitment in check with Ron's willingness to put his outcomes in her hands. Imagine that tripping over Ron's shoes on the kitchen floor actually makes Gayle think about the last time he made her laugh. If it did, she might willingly listen to his complaints about his job even as she applies ice to her shoe-assailed ankle. Her mind compensates for the experienced costs of coordinating their lives by underlining his virtues.

Efficient, but Flexible, Goal Implementation

Because partners are interdependent in multiple respects, the complex demands of social coordination could foreclose other goal pursuits (Enfield & Levinson, 2006). Our model of the interdependent mind also attributes the if–then rules with the power to efficiently but flexibly regulate affect, cognition, and behavior (Bargh, 2007; Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006).

By *efficient*, we mean that the if–then rules are implicit or unconscious features of people's general working knowledge of relationships (Baldwin, 1992). Because the mind cannot afford the luxury of thinking through every decision it needs to make, social cognition scholars assume that ongoing and complex problems underlying social life have automatic and effortless solutions (Bargh, 2007; Bargh & Ferguson, 2000; Bargh & Williams, 2006; Dijksterhuis, Chartrand, & Aarts, 2007; Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006). The "efficiency" criterion stipulates that the if–then rules that comprise the interdependent mind are implicit procedural features of relationship representations (Baldwin, 1992; Holmes & Murray, 2007; Murray, Aloni, et al., 2009; Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008; Murray, Holmes, et al., 2009; Tooby & Cosmides, 1996). By *implicit*, we mean that these rules can operate without conscious mediation (Bargh, 2007; Dijksterhuis et al., 2007). Situations that activate the "if" elicit the propensity to engage in the "then" without any conscious intent, thereby freeing needed self-regulatory resources for other pursuits (Finkel et al., 2006).

Evidence for such nonconscious mediation of social behavior is now ubiquitous (see Bargh, 2007, for a review). Activating the construct of politeness without awareness increases patience (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1995); priming the stereotype of African Americans increases aggressiveness (Bargh et al., 1995); priming the expectations a beloved mother holds elicits greater achievement strivings (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003); and priming Einstein (an imposing exemplar) eclipses intellectual performance (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1998).[2] Such automatic

behavior facilitates the complex and ongoing task of social coordination. Indeed, the mind automatically elicits the behavioral propensity likely to produce social interactions that facilitate one's goals. The desire to affiliate automatically increases the tendency to gain interpersonal favor by mimicking the expressions and gestures of others (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). Research examining intergroup relations further reveals striking evidence of the automatic tuning of one's behavior to match the goals of others. For instance, priming stereotypes activates behavioral goals that facilitate one's desired interactions with stereotyped group members (Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2006; Gunz, Sahdra, Holmes, Fitzsimons, & Kunda, 2006; Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005). Priming the stereotype of being advanced in age slows walking speed for those people who anticipate harmonious interactions with the elderly; it speeds the pace (and departure) of people who anticipate more disagreeable interactions (Cesario et al., 2006).

By *flexible*, we mean that the power of these rules to compel overt behavior should also shift with motivation and opportunity to correct or override the rules (Olson & Fazio, 2008). Flexibility implies that an automatic urge to think, feel, or behave in a particular way is less likely to translate into correspondent action if people are motivated *and* able to correct it (Murray, Aloni, et al., 2009; Murray, Derrick, et al., 2008; Murray, Holmes, et al., 2009). Consistent with this logic, models of attitudes, impression formation, and stereotyping assume that such automatic propensities control behavior unless people have the motivation, opportunity, and capacity to override them (Fazio & Towles-Schwen, 1999; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Kunda & Spencer, 2003; Olson & Fazio, 2008; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). In fact, the behavioral effects of automatically activated goals can be overridden by situational cues that suggest pursuing such goals might preempt more important goal pursuits (Aarts, Custers, & Holland, 2007; Macrae & Johnston, 1998). For instance, people primed with helpfulness pick up clean pens for a clumsy colleague. However, they leave ink-stained pens at her feet because the now more pressing goal of staying clean trumps the goal to help (Macrae & Johnston, 1998). Similarly, people who are generally motivated to be egalitarian avoid applying stereotypes that are activated unconsciously when these distasteful thoughts enter their minds. People who experience no such goal conflict make no such effort (Kunda & Spencer, 2003).

Applying this flexibility criterion to relationships means that partners can be motivated to correct or overturn "in-the-moment" impulses that conflict with broader goal pursuits. As we see in Chapter 2, trust in the partner's responsiveness supplies the motivation to correct if–then

rules that provide a bad "fit" to broader goal pursuits. Trust supplies this motivation because being more trusting generally allows people to connect (i.e., approach), and being less trusting generally motivates people to self-protect (i.e., avoid). Now imagine a highly trusting Gayle in a situation where her automatic impulse is to self-protect. Perhaps Ron transgressed and refused to take their kids to the doctor so she could meet an important client. Her impulse to retaliate for his selfishness (by shouting at him or slamming a door) isn't likely to feel "right" because such an impulse compromises her general desire to be close. Not comfortable with her impulses, she might then instead decide to give Ron another chance. However, a less trusting Gayle would have no reason to correct her automatic impulse to distance herself from him because such an inclination provides a good or comfortable fit to her chronic goals.

Suitability for the Relationship Circumstance

Relationships are different. Some are just riskier than others. Therefore, our model of the interdependent mind assumes that the if–then rules that partners make a habit come to match the character of the risks encountered in a specific relationship. Not all couples are the same, obviously. Partners differ in compatibility, and as a result, the type and degree of conflict partners face at each level of interdependence varies across relationships. Some relationships are riskier than others because some partners face more serious and more frequent conflicts of interest at the level of life tasks. Coordination might be difficult because there are too many chores to do with too little time. Some relationships are riskier than others because partners' preferences and personal goals are less compatible. Deciding what to do together simply will be harder for partners whose basic interests and inclinations take them in different directions. It's hard for a coach potato to keep an exercise addict happy. Some relationships are riskier than others because partners' goals for the relationship are harder to reconcile. Someone who wants a constant companion is going to struggle feeling close enough to someone who prefers to flit and flutter from friend to friend. To coordinate mutually responsive interaction patterns, the structure of the interdependent mind also adjusts to these vast differences in partner compatibility, and thus to the level of risk encountered in a given relationship. In relationships, as in shoes, one size does not fit all.

The relationship specificity of risk introduces the final consideration: Some of the if–then rules are more useful (and more used) for some couples than others. Therefore, the ease with which particular if–then rules can be activated needs to shift to match the character of the risks in a

specific relationship (Wood & Neal, 2007).[3] As we see in Chapter 2, the interpersonal mind does something different to coordinate responsiveness when partners face or perceive many high-risk situations than it needs to do to coordinate responsiveness when partners face many low-risk situations. Therefore, partners in a high-risk relationship are likely to develop different if–then rule habits than partners in a low-risk relationship. In fact, we'll argue that the capacity to develop idiosyncratic habits is what distinguishes patterns of responsiveness in one relationship from another. In some relationships, partners rely on each other primarily for the exchange of small favors; in others, they largely restrict interaction to coordinating instrumental roles like caregiver and provider; in still others, they rely on each other for emotional support and negotiate shared identities. Our model assumes that relationships develop such different "personalities" in how responsiveness is expressed because if–then rules adapt themselves over time to match the risks common to a particular relationship. Our model also assumes that such "personalities" control how satisfying the relationship becomes because the ways in which partners are responsive (and not responsive) to each other's needs control the rewards (and costs) of interaction.

Summary

Figure 1.1 summarizes the five elements underlying effective motivation-management. These considerations all derive from the coordination problem posed by negotiating conflicts of interest situations. Such situations offer the twin temptations of self-interest (i.e., selfishness and self-protection). To promote mutually responsive interaction in the face of such self-interested concerns, the interdependent mind has (1) if–then rules for telling Gayle when to trust Ron; (2) if–then rules for giving direction to Gayle's actions; (3) if–then rules for equalizing commitment by coordinating Gayle's expression of trust with Ron's expressions of commitment; (4) the capacity to run without power (i.e., efficiently) most of the time (i.e., flexibly); and (5) the capacity to match the if–then rules it relies on to suit the risks characteristic to a given relationship circumstance.

In this way, the rules that come to energize or "run" this smart unconscious shape the developing "personality" of the relationship by controlling what types of responsive behaviors partners do (and do not) exchange as they coordinate their interactions. In attributing such functionality to an interdependent mind, we should also clarify what we do not mean. We are not proposing the existence of a relationship homunculus. We do not think there is a little person or "mini-me" inside Gayle's head telling
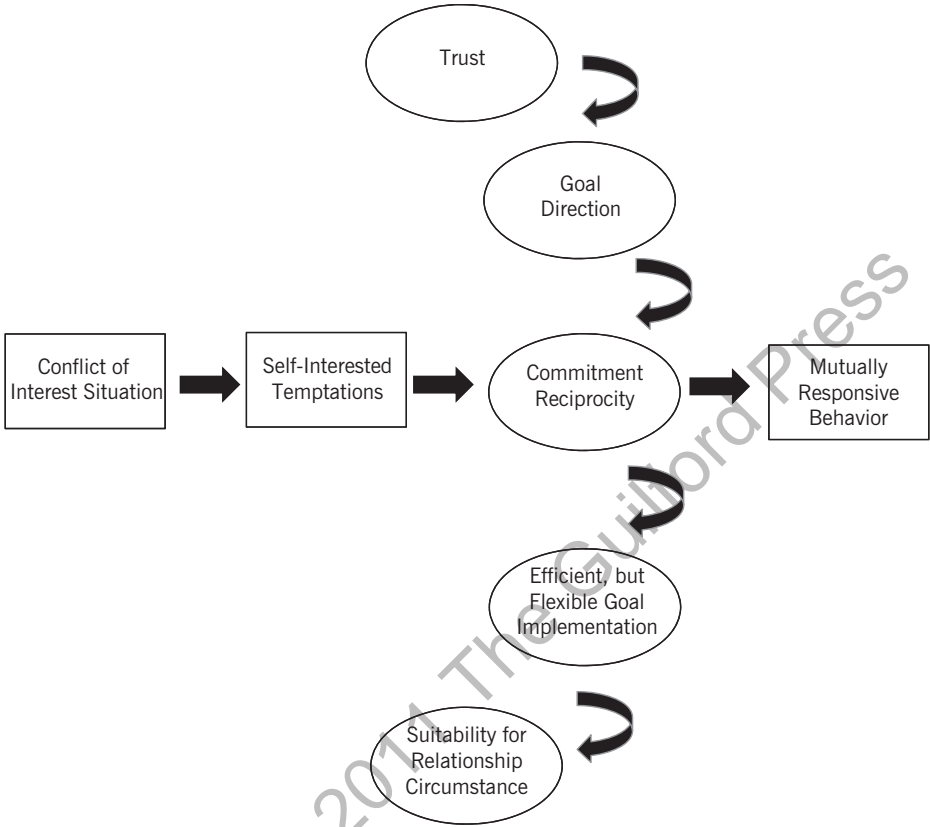
FIGURE 1.1. The basic requirements for effective motivation-management.

when to feel, what to think, and how to behave (Wegner, 2002). We use the term "interdependent mind" in the sense that philosophers, social scientists, and cognitive scientists use the term the "social mind" (Bargh, 2007; Dennett, 1991; Tetlock, 2002; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005). Such scholars argue that the mind evolved certain capacities to foster the interpersonal connections required for basic physical survival. One such capacity is consciousness and the related capacity to distinguish one's own goals from the goals of others (Dunbar & Shultz, 2007; Hare, 2007; Herrmann, Call, Hernandez-Lloreda, Hare, & Tomasello, 2007). We believe that the if–then rules comprising the interdependent mind similarly developed to ease the difficulties inherent in maintaining a stable adult romantic relationship. These rules collectively function as a "smart relationship unconscious" that motivates mutually responsive behavior

(Bargh & Morsella, 2008; Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006). Second, in arguing that the interdependent mind eases partner interactions, we are not about to argue that it also makes every relationship the picture of domestic bliss. In later chapters, we instead describe how applying the if–then rules in certain circumstances might make some relationships the picture of domestic misery.

BOOK OVERVIEW: IN DETAIL

Before we proceed to the next chapter, we introduce a few more points of housekeeping about organization. Chapter 2 formalizes our model of the interdependent mind. In this chapter, we describe how the if–then rules within the interdependent mind control trust (i.e., if–then vigilance rules), shape interpersonal goals (i.e., if–then goal-orientation rules), and direct behavior (i.e., if–then implementation rules). We then describe how the particular if–then rules the interdependent mind relies on most heavily create the relationship's "personality" by controlling how responsiveness is expressed. In Chapters 3 through 8, we break the model of the interdependent mind down into its component elements.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce trust and commitment, the psychological foundation for coordinated and mutually responsive behavior. In these chapters, we elaborate on what it means to be trusting and what it means to be committed. Chapter 3 defines the experience of trust in the partner by outlining the if–then rules that gauge and maintain this sentiment. The if–then rules for vigilance link signs of one's value to the partner (i.e., "if") to the contingent response to trust or distrust (i.e., "then"). The if–then rules for trust insurance link any concerns about the partner's trustworthiness (i.e., "if") to behavioral efforts to ensure that one's trust is not misplaced (i.e., "then"). Chapter 4 defines the experience of commitment to the partner by outlining the if–then implementation rules that gauge and maintain this sentiment. The if–then rules for commitment link signs of one's greater (or lesser) value to the partner (i.e., "if" trust) to the contingent response to increase (or decrease) connection to the partner (i.e., "then"). The if–then rules for commitment insurance link the costs that come from such connection (i.e., "if") to the contingent response to value the partner more (i.e., "then").

Chapters 5 through 8 describe how the if–then rules operate in concert in specific conflicts of interest to extract as much responsiveness as the situation allows. Chapter 5 introduces the idea that situations afford the opportunity to pursue different interpersonal goals. Imagine that Ron

and Gayle both face busy weeks at work but someone needs to forego work to stay at home to nurse their toddler through his flu. The goal to connect (i.e., approach) or self-protect (i.e., avoid) each pursues in this situation depends entirely on the situation's perceived risks. Is sacrificing one's own work an opportunity to demonstrate caring for the partner or an invitation to the partner's exploitation? Chapter 5 both describes the process of risk appraisal and details how subjective perceptions of risk control the interpersonal goals that people pursue in specific situations. In this context, we detail if–then goal-orientation rules that link expectations of acceptance (i.e., low risk) and expectations of rejection (i.e., high risk) to the goals to connect and self-protect, respectively.

Chapters 6 and 7 reveal how the pursuit of specific interpersonal goals activates if–then implementation rules in memory that serve connectedness and self-protection goals, respectively, by eliciting goal-congruent behavior. Chapter 6 describes how the mind operates in situations that better afford the pursuit of connectedness goals. It explains how the goal to connect activates complementary if–then rules that motivate Gayle to depend more on Ron (the complementary commitment rule) and to justify any costs she incurs in doing so (the complementary commitment-insurance rule). Chapter 7 describes how the mind operates in situations that better afford the pursuit of self-protection goals. It shows how the goal to self-protect activates complementary if–then rules that motivate Ron to depend less on Gayle (the complementary commitment rule) while eliciting her greater dependence on him (the complementary trust-insurance rule). By wedding the goals in the situation to the propensity to feel, think, and behave in goal-congruent ways, the mind effectively reaps as much responsive (and as little nonresponsive) behavior as the situation affords.

Chapter 8 describes how this process of goal-congruent rule activation and expression creates the relationship's "personality." Relationships differ in risk. First, they differ in objective risk. Some partners face conflicts of interest that are easy to solve because their preferences are largely compatible; some partners face conflicts of interest that are difficult to solve because their preferences are largely incompatible. Second, they differ in subjective risk. Some partners simply trust that their conflicts are remediable, whereas other partners do not. Chapter 8 delineates how trust and the risks inherent to the relationship elicit its "personality" by controlling how often specific if–then rules get activated in memory and expressed in behavior. Such if–then rule habits control whether responsiveness resides in the exchange of small favors; the coordination of complementary roles;

the communal provision of support; or the mutual validation and negotiation of shared personal goals and identities.

In Chapters 9 through 12, we put the interpersonal mind back together again and develop applications of the model. Chapter 9 describes how the interpersonal mind works to coordinate trust and commitment during the earliest phases of a relationship's development. Chapter 10 describes how the interdependent mind adapts to meet the unique challenges faced when interdependence increases and conflicts of interest mount, such as happens with the birth of a first child. Chapter 11 tackles the problem of why particular dispositions—such as attachment style, neuroticism, or self-esteem—matter in relationships, whereas other dispositions do not. It also specifies how contextual factors, such as economic stress, change how the interpersonal mind coordinates mutuality in responsiveness. Chapter 12 spells out how the model might be applied to preempt relationship distress and promote relationship happiness. In this chapter, we use our model to offer a practical guide for relationship happiness.

In the next chapter, we formalize our motivation-management model of mutual responsiveness into a theory of the interdependent mind's structure—what essentially functions as a "smart unconscious" for relationships.

NOTES

1. We use the term *reciprocity in commitment* to capture equality in partners' experience of commitment across time and situations within the relationship. As a point to carry forward, it's important to note that reciprocity does not require equal expressions of commitment in a specific situation within the relationship. It does require that expressions of commitment generally balance out across partners over successive interactions (Holmes, 1981; Reis et al., 2004).
2. Priming refers to the process by which exposure to a particular stimulus affects responses to a subsequent stimulus without conscious mediation (Franzoi, 2009).
3. These risks may be either objective or perceived. Namely, some couples face objectively more difficult conflicts of interest (e.g., managing too little money vs. deciding how to spend a surplus of money). Other couples might perceive even easy-to-manage conflicts as intractable because being less trusting sensitizes them to the possibility of rejection (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). We return to this in Chapter 2 and explore these issues in depth in Chapter 5.