INTRODUCTION

The view that human interactions consist chiefly of a process of social exchange between participants is accepted by almost all contemporary investigators of human behavior. In psychology and sociology, the view that all interactions, not just economic ones, will involve exchange can be traced back to the seminal works of Thibaut and Kelley (1959), Homans (1961), and Blau (1964). Friendship formation, romantic attachment, loneliness, the formation and maintenance of status hierarchies, cooperation and competition between both individuals and groups, and interpersonal communication are only a few of the areas in which social exchange principles have been applied since these original formulations.

Prior investigators of social exchange have tended to focus upon the manner in which people attempt to maximize their outcomes in social exchanges and their reactions to these outcomes (e.g., Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973) and upon the nature of the resources that people exchange with one another (e.g., Foa & Foa, 1974, 1976). Less attention has been paid to the issues of how a person selects a particular resource for exchange with another and the urgency he or
she feels to make such a selection after having received a resource from
the other. It is the intent of this chapter to explore the issues of selec-
tivity and urgency in exchange and to point out how these constructs are
relevant to close and intimate relationships. Individuals in close rela-
tionships should be particularly concerned about choosing or selecting
those benefits that most meet the needs, desires, and wants of the other
and less concerned with quickly returning some benefit simply to dis-
charge an obligation. In short, intimate relationships may be governed
by different principles of exchange than nonintimate relationships (Mills
& Clark, 1982). To a large extent such differences may involve the issues
of selectivity and urgency.

While it is not the intent of this chapter to provide a comprehensive
description of social exchange theories or their basic principles (for re-
views see Burgess & Huston, 1979; Roloff, 1981; Simpson, 1976), we need
to discuss some of this literature initially to examine two basic issues: (1)
why are people concerned with providing benefits to others? and (2) what
types of benefits are available for exchange? We then present a discussion
of those factors and individual differences that we see as important in the
process of selecting a particular resource to return to another. We con-
clude with a discussion of the relationships among selectivity and four
related concepts or topics: communal and exchange relationships, recip-
rocity, rules of fairness, and responsiveness. Throughout this chapter
exchange is broadly defined and includes social and communicative as
well as more "economic" exchanges.

THE DESIRE TO BENEFIT AN INTERACTION PARTNER

The Norm of Reciprocity and Equity Theory

Gouldner (1960) proposed that human interactions are governed by a
"norm of reciprocity." He viewed this norm as minimally prescribing
that we help those who have helped us and that we refrain from harm-
ing those who have helped us. This first requirement provides one
reason people will be motivated to return benefits to a person who has
benefited them. The norm of reciprocity has formed one of the bases of
equity theory (Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1973) and has frequently been
invoked to explain reciprocity in exchanges of self-disclosure (e.g.,
Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Derlega, Harris, & Chaikin, 1973). Particularly
in the latter case, the norm of reciprocity has been taken to imply that
recipients of another’s self-disclosure are under an obligation to return
disclosure of comparable value (intimacy). While other explanations for
disclosure reciprocity have been proposed, the normative approach ap-
ppears to have the greatest experimental support (Archer, 1979).

Equity theory highlights the fact that in considering what one partici-
ponent in an exchange "owes" the other, attention must be given to each
person’s inputs or contributions to the relationship as well as their out-
comes. An exchange or a relationship is held to be equitable when the
ratio of outcomes to inputs for each participant is equal to the ratio of
outcomes to inputs for the other participant(s). The person who has
contributed more should receive better outcomes than a person who has
contributed less.

Equity researchers have shown that subjects who find themselves in
inequitable exchanges will feel distressed and aroused, compared to
those for whom the situation is equitable (Austin & Walster, 1974).
Moreover, this distress will result regardless of whether the person is
being underbenefited or overbenefited in comparison to his or her contri-
butions. In addition, it has been shown that when subjects find them-
selves in an inequitable situation, they will attempt to restore equity to it.
Walster et al. (1973) note two general ways in which equity is generally
restored. First, a party who is being overbenefited may attempt to com-
panse the other, exploited party (Berscheid, Walster, & Barclay, 1969).
A second type of response involves restoring psychological rather than
actual, equity to the situation. A person who has exploited or harmed
another may convince him or herself that the situation is still an equitable
one through derogating the exploited party (Davis & Jones, 1964; Sykes &
Matza, 1957) or by minimizing the person’s suffering or their own respon-
sibility for it (Brock & Buss, 1964; Sykes & Matza, 1957). The adequacy of
available compensations for complete restoration of equity appears to be
a highly important factor in determining which of these two responses
will occur. Berscheid and Walster (1967) and Berscheid et al. (1969) find
that compensation is more likely when the available means of compensa-
tion will completely restore equity to the situation than when they are
either too small to compensate for the former inequity or so large that they
would overcompensate for it.

The internalization of the principle of equity should be one factor
leading a person to reciprocate or return benefits he or she has received
from an exchange partner. To the extent that the individual subscribes to
the principle of equity, he or she feels a greater urgency to repay the
other. Also this sense of urgency should increase as the degree to which
he or she has been benefited increases. Other factors that will affect the
sense of urgency a person feels to benefit another who has previously
helped him or her may include the type of benefit received and the
attributions made for the benefactor's behavior.

While few persons would question the proposition that equity princi-
ples are operative in governing exchanges in relatively casual or busi-
ness relationships, Hatfield, Utne, and Traupmann (1979) note that
there is considerable debate over whether or not such principles are
operative in close or love relationships. They note that some theorists
(e.g., Fromm, 1956; Rubin 1973) view love as transcending the principles
of exchange. The fact that equity considerations are operative within
close relationships is illustrated in a study by Walster, Walster, and
Traupmann (1978). These researchers found that as compared to per-
sons who felt they were in less equitable relationships, those in more
equitable ones reported feeling happier and more content and were
more certain that their relationships would continue in the future.

While acknowledging that love relationships and close relationships
differ from other relationships in a number of ways including intensity
of affect, the depth and breadth of participants' knowledge of one an-
other, and the value and variety of the resources that are exchanged,
Walster et al. (1973) and Hatfield et al. (1979) argue that these differences
should simply affect the ease with which equity is calculated in close
versus casual relationships and the means participants in such rela-
tionships are likely to choose to restore or maintain equity. Regarding
the first point, it may be that determinations of equity are both more
difficult and less frequently made in close relationships than in casual
ones. Because close relationships are extended in time, participants will
have to draw upon a large number of experiences in determining
whether their relationship is fair. The temporal duration of these rela-
tionships may also affect the manner in which participants choose to
benefit one another or restore equity. For example, if one participant
knows the other will be needing a certain benefit in the future he or she
may not be concerned with the immediate degree of equity in the rela-
tionship, realizing that he or she will benefit the other at this later time.
The partner, too, may well understand this and so not be distressed that
a benefit is not immediately reciprocated. This is of course, due to the
fact that the process of becoming closer has resulted in the development
of trust between individuals. One person no longer needs to be con-
cerned with being exploited by or with exploiting the other. To the
extent participants trust one another it is unnecessary to examine the
fairness of the relationship. In fact, it may even be detrimental. Levinger
(1979) notes that one sign that a relationship is in trouble is when particip-
ants begin to question whether or not they are receiving as much as
they should be.
Outcome Interdependence

It is apparent from the above discussion that we may benefit others in part due to a feeling of obligation or a desire to maintain equity. A theory of outcome interdependence (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) provides a framework suggesting several additional factors that may lead one individual to provide benefits to an interaction partner.

To provide some background, Thibaut & Kelley (1959) examined how interactions might be understood from the perspective of the outcomes received by participants in the interactions. Outcomes were very broadly defined and represented the net differences between the rewards obtained through interaction and the costs incurred in the course of that interaction. Thibaut and Kelley noted that such outcomes are generally determined by the actions of both the participants in an interaction. By varying their behavior, people will influence not only their own rewards and costs but also the rewards and costs of others. Like all social exchange theorists, Thibaut and Kelley assumed that people were motivated to maximize their rewards while minimizing their costs.

In later reformulations and extensions of the theory (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) it was emphasized that participants will take the outcomes received by a partner as well as their own outcomes into consideration when deciding how to act and when evaluating an interaction. Considering the other's outcomes in addition to one's own will lead to a reconsideration of environmentally given patterns of rewards and costs and to the transformation of these patterns.

While not representing a true example of interdependence, an example may help clarify some of what is involved in one type of transformation. Consider an individual, Jane, who is attempting to decide between two courses of action. One of these actions, (Act A), provides Jane with a net reward of '3' and her interaction partner with a net reward of '0'. The other course of action, (Act B), would provide both Jane and her partner with outcomes of '2'. Jane would choose Act A if she were motivated to maximize her own outcomes ('3' > '2') or to maximize her gains relative to her partner (a difference of '3' as opposed to '0'). However, when Jane takes her partner's outcomes into account, she would choose Act B if she desired to maintain equality in the relationship (both receive a reward of '2') or if she were attempting to maximize the total amount of benefit received by the pair ('4' > '3') or if she wished to maximize her partner's outcomes ('2' > '0'). In each of the above examples Jane is said to have "transformed" the environmentally given pat-
terns into behaviorally effective patterns and it is the latter that will determine her behavior.

The fact that people do make transformations similar to the ones just described indicates that motives other than merely the desire to maximize one's own outcomes may be operative in interpersonal interactions. Such motives may arise through socialization, because of the situation in which a specific interaction occurs or due to personal characteristics of an individual. The socialization experiences of most people should lead them to view a concern with benefiting another and with maximizing joint rewards as appropriate in close or intimate relationships. In addition, Kelley (1979) notes that the act of expressing personal dispositions may be rewarding in and of itself. Thus a competitive person finds the act of competing rewarding and an altruistic person is rewarded by helping. In close relationships in which people care deeply about one another, one would expect the dispositions a person finds rewarding to involve demonstrating concern with another's outcomes and with the joint outcomes received by the pair.

Thus a person may provide benefits to another because of the transformations they make (due to socialization, the nature of the situation or personal dispositions). They may also provide benefits because they receive rewards themselves through the act of benefiting a partner. These factors provide two reasons in addition to the concern with reciprocity or equity previously considered, that may lead people to benefit an interaction partner.

Because individuals' transformations, and thus their interpersonal dispositions, are reflected in their behavior, Kelley (1979) notes that people will use the choices another makes to infer that person's traits or dispositions. For instance, did Jane in the above example choose Act B because she was attempting to maximize her partner's outcomes (was altruistic) or because she was very concerned with maintaining equality? The view that people will tend to make dispositional attributions is consistent with the idea that they are motivated to identify relatively invariant causes for behavior (Heider, 1958). If the cause of behaviors or transformational tendencies is located in stable dispositions of the other, these may subsequently be drawn upon in order to plan one's own future actions. Kelley (1979) holds that the tendency to make such dispositional attributions will be greatest in close relationships. The repeated interactions that such relationships involve make it most important that participants understand the manner in which their partner is likely to transform given patterns of rewards and costs in order for either the individual or the pair to achieve maximal benefit. Moreover, because any single behavior is likely to be ambiguous in terms of the disposition
it reflects, stable attributions may require repeated interactions. Given the importance of such attributions when continued interaction is expected, one might predict that people are more likely to make attributions about a partner's dispositions when future interactions are expected than when they are not.

The types of dispositions that an individual infers an interaction partner to possess may have consequences for (1) the degree to which that person will reciprocate benefits, (2) the form such reciprocation will take, (3) and the speed with which behavior is reciprocated. To return to our earlier example, if I infer that Jane’s choice of Act B stems from a concern that I be benefited as much as possible, I may be more concerned with providing her with rewards than if I had attributed her action to a desire to ensure equity. Given the importance that the attributions one makes about a partner’s dispositions can have, and the ambiguity that may be involved in making such inferences, it is not surprising that disagreements over whether or not a given behavior reflects an underlying trait or over which trait it reflects are frequent sources of conflict in close relationships (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Orvis, Kelley, & Butler, 1976).

Several points can be noted in summarizing the preceding section. First, there is a social norm that obligates people to return benefits to those who have benefited them and to maintain equity in their relationships. Second, individuals in close relationships, and some individuals in general, may find it intrinsically rewarding to benefit an interaction partner. Finally, whether individuals provide another with benefits and the nature of the benefits they provide may depend upon the attributions they have made concerning the other’s transformational tendencies and dispositions.

RESOURCE THEORY—WHAT IS EXCHANGED?

Once a person has decided to return a resource, he or she must decide what specific resource to give. While we said earlier that this chapter would employ a broad definition of exchange, this does not imply that we view all exchanges of all things as equivalent. The type of resource that is received may have important consequences for the type of resource that is returned and both given and returned resources may impact on the relationship between exchange partners. Thus, before considering the manner in which a recipient selects a particular resource
to return, it is important to give some attention to the different types of resources that are exchanged and the likely effects of receiving a particular type of resource.

Work in this area has been relatively sparse, compared to the amount of attention that has been given to factors that motivate a recipient to return benefits or that affect evaluations of exchanges. However, Foa and Foa (1974, 1976, 1980) have proposed and investigated one general system for the classification of resources. They first distinguish six general classes of resources: money, goods, services, love, status and information. They next propose that these six classes may be arrayed along two dimensions. The first of these dimensions is termed particularism and refers to the extent to which a resource derives value because of the particular person giving it. Love is seen as the most particularistic type of resource. It typically matters a great deal who it is that says "I love you" or otherwise expresses affection. Status and services are viewed as somewhat less particularistic in nature. Information and goods derive still less of their value on the basis of the particular person providing them and money will be the least particularistic resource, having the same value regardless of who is providing it. The second dimension Foa and Foa distinguish deals with how concrete or symbolic a resource is. Along this dimension, goods and services are seen as very concrete resources. Information and status, on the other hand, are extremely symbolic since they are typically conveyed only through verbal channels. Love and money are viewed as intermediate between these two extremes along the dimension of concreteness.

Foa and Foa (1974) provided subjects with messages designed to illustrate a benefit in each of the six classes and instructed them to sort the messages into as many categories as they thought appropriate. Results were generally supportive of the proposed structure. Where confusions did occur they involved the confusion of adjacent classes. More recently, Brinberg and Castell (1982) asked subjects to rate the similarity—dissimilarity of 12 behaviors designed to illustrate the different resource classes. The similarity ratings were then subjected to a multidimensional scaling analysis. Again results generally confirmed the structure that Foa and Foa had proposed. One exception in the Brinberg and Castell (1982) study involved the fact that in their college student sample, money was seen as being more similar to love than the model would predict. Brinberg and Castell speculate that this may be due to the fact that within a student sample, money may be a relatively scarce resource. Other research (e.g., Brock, 1968) suggests that the value of a "resource" will increase in proportion to its scarcity. It would seem reasonable to assume that scarce and valued resources would be viewed as being ex-
changed only between those persons who had a more unique relationship to each other. Thus, these resources would appear similar.

If, as the above line of reasoning suggests, the value of a resource will increase as that resource becomes more particularistic, it is almost certain that particularistic resources will be freely exchanged only among those who have a close relationship. As Altman and Taylor (1973) have noted, as the potential benefits of an exchange or a relationship increase, the potential costs will also increase. Thus before highly valued, particularistic, resources are given, there must exist a feeling of trust that the exchange will be completed and that the other will also provide benefits.

Foa and Foa (1976) also describe several studies bearing on the type of resource that is selected for return after having received a resource. Both subjects who were interacting with a confederate and subjects who were asked to imagine that they had just provided a certain resource to a friend expressed greater satisfaction with returned benefits that were similar to those they had initially given. Two additional findings from subjects imagining exchanges with a friend are noteworthy. First, the preference for receiving a resource from the same class as the resource initially provided became more pronounced as the initial resource became more particularistic. Second, there was a general preference for receiving love as a returned benefit. These latter findings reinforce our belief that exchanges of particularistic resources will be more likely among those who have a close relationship.

Foa and Foa (1974, 1976) also investigated negative exchanges in which a person is initially deprived of a resource. In one study subjects were asked to imagine different interactions in which another first deprived them of a resource from one of the six classes, after which they deprived this person of various resources. Subjects reported greater satisfaction when the resource they denied or took from the other was similar to that which they had been deprived of. In addition, there was also a preference for denying or withdrawing love from the other.

In another study subjects who were initially deprived of a resource from one of the six classes by a confederate were later given the opportunity to retaliate, either by depriving her of money or subjecting her to derogatory statements (taking away love). Results indicated that as the resource available for retaliation (money or love) became more dissimilar to the one subjects were initially deprived of, the intensity of retaliation increased, but that despite this increased intensity, subjects remained more hostile toward the confederate.

It remains to be demonstrated whether similar findings in terms of intensity and satisfaction will occur in positive exchanges. On the basis of Foa and Foa's model, however, it would be predicted that after receiv-
ing a benefit in a given class, a subject would repay a greater amount as the resources available for repayment diverged from what he or she received. It would also be predicted that subjects would report less satisfaction with the exchange when they could not return a similar resource.

Foa and Foa’s model not only provides us with a means of classifying the types of benefits that are exchanged but also begins to explore how people might selectively choose a certain resource to return to another. It proposes that they will choose one that is similar to the one given them. While Foa and Foa have discussed similarity in terms of the class to which a resource belongs, it is tempting to speculate on whether or not the same reasoning might not apply in terms of the needs met by a resource. If a person provides a resource that satisfies a need of the other, will the exchange be more satisfying if the recipient returns a similar resource or a dissimilar one that reduces a need of the original donor to a similar extent?

The choice of a certain type of resource to return will also be affected by several other factors. The effect that the closeness of a relationship is likely to have was previously noted. Foa and Foa (1976) also point out that the context in which an exchange takes place will influence the type of resource that is returned. They note that the same resource (e.g., a delicious meal) leads to very different types of returned resources depending on whether it is consumed in a restaurant or a friend’s home. Different individuals may also have differing preferences for returning certain types of resources. In later sections of this chapter we will address the manner in which individual differences and other situational factors may influence the manner in which a person selects benefits to return.

SELECTIVITY IN SOCIAL EXCHANGE

The process of selecting a benefit for another implies that an individual P has determined that it is appropriate and/or desirable to return a benefit to another O. Having decided to return a benefit, what does P give? Selectivity refers to the process by which P chooses a benefit to bestow upon O. The more that P’s chosen benefit to O meets O’s desires, needs, and preferences, the more selective the benefit is viewed as being.

Selectivity implies a choice between a number of possible options. In
choosing a benefit for another, P must decide what he or she can provide as a benefit. Two issues are relevant here: (1) P’s perceived time frame (whether there are possible future options and the urgency which P feels to repay a benefit), and (2) the resources P has available within that time frame. Given what P could provide, what P decides to provide given these constraints is apt to depend upon at least three additional factors: (1) social constraints such as norms, perceptions of socially appropriate behavior, and the physical constraints of the contexts, (2) perceptions of O and the relationship (e.g., knowledge of the other, past interactions, and perceptions of the other’s characteristics, intentions and goals) and (3) P’s own goals, expectations, motives, and characteristics. Let us consider each of these factors in greater detail.

Benefits Available for Return

Time Frame and Urgency

The time frame is the period of time in which an individual P perceives that he or she ought to reciprocate by giving a benefit or benefits in exchange for a benefit received from another individual. The time frame may be short because the perceived duration of the relationship itself is short (e.g., we don’t expect to see this person in the future) or because there is a stimulus or external event which poses a time limit (e.g., a wedding or birthday present usually must be purchased before the event). The shorter the perceived time frame, the less likely we are to choose a selective benefit. As the time frame increases we (1) have more time within which to plan and contemplate giving a selective benefit, and (2) have access to a wider range of resources and options from which to choose a more selective benefit. However, while taking a longer period of time within which to choose a benefit may provide one with more of an opportunity to be selective, a longer time span (period of time which elapses before P bestows a benefit upon O) does not mean that an individual will choose a more selective benefit. Consider a man who puts off repaying a neighbor for a favor because he can’t find that “perfect” benefit to return. Such a man runs the risk of never returning a benefit to his neighbor. In a later section, the implied relationship here between selectivity, time-span, and equity will be discussed further. The shorter the perceived time frame the more we are likely to feel a sense of urgency to find something to return quickly. At this point the giver of the benefit may be more concerned with meeting social obligations or reciprocity norms than with the needs, desires or wishes of the recipient of the benefit. Even when the time frame is relatively long,
some individuals may be especially likely to repay a benefit quickly in order to discharge a perceived obligation as soon as possible. We will discuss such individual difference factors in a later section.

Resources Available

Within a particular time frame, individuals usually have a variety of resources available to them. Several general classes of resources are described here, including the following ones:

1. Personal and affiliative resources. These involve being able to offer such benefits as companionship, support, affection, and praise. Also included here are resources that have a unique personal meaning and are apt to be irreplaceable. Examples might include a ring given to us by a parent, a family heirloom, or a pipe smoked by a now-deceased father. Giving this type of benefit to another is likely to occur only in close relationships and to have special meaning for both the giver and the recipient.

2. Resources drawing on general or specific areas of knowledge that enable one to provide needed or desired information or services to the other. Examples might include offering to cook a gourmet meal or using one's knowledge of plumbing to repair a leaky faucet.

3. Resources stemming from one's social position that involve the ability to provide the other with power, status, wealth or material resources.

4. Time resources that enhance the selection and giving of appropriate benefits.

Having resources such as the ones distinguished above at one's disposal would allow one to provide a host of economic and social rewards (see Buss, 1983; Foa & Foa, 1974). While we have available at our disposal a number of resources, even within a relatively short time-frame, simply because these resources are available does not mean that we will necessarily use them to provide a benefit. We have a limited store of most resources and in considering what benefit to provide to another we need to take into account what other commitments of our resources have been made or will be made. As Foa and Foa (1974) have noted, many of our resources, once given, reduce our own store. This is most clearly the case with concrete goods that are transferred to another, but it also applies to any service or act that requires the expenditure of our time. In short, the set of probable benefits to provide to another will be typically smaller than the total set of resources a person possesses for exchange. Some social norms and rules provide guidelines in assessing
to what extent we should use available resources in returning a benefit to another. Several such norms have received empirical attention and we address their influence in the section on related concepts.

Benefits Selected for Return

Knowledge of the Other

One of the most important factors influencing our ability to be selective in returning a benefit is our knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about the other. Presumably, the closer our relationship to the other and the longer we have known the other, the more likely it is that we will have detailed and extensive knowledge of that other’s desires, needs and preferences (person-specific information). We may have such knowledge of others because they have explicitly told us verbally what they desire or need or because they have indicated such a need or desire implicitly via nonverbal, verbal or other cues. Another possibility is that we may determine what the other is likely to need from some other source who has access to information about the other’s desires or needs (e.g., someone in this other’s social network). Finally, we may infer the other’s desires or needs from a common knowledge of what individuals need or desire in particular contexts. Thus, for example, suitable benefits to give a woman whose husband has just died include an arrangement of flowers, a letter of condolence, a look of concern, an offer to help out, a casserole, a hug, saying “I’m sorry,” and so forth. Suitable benefits to give another whose daughter has just married, (where the mother likes the new son-in-law) include smiling and hugging, complimenting the mother on her dress (or the house, the reception or the food), giving the daughter a gift, and so on. There are clearly classes of appropriate benefits to give depending upon the situation. It would be considered in poor taste, for example, to give a bride (even one who is pregnant) a baby carriage for a wedding present (unless the couple requested the present).

In all, there seem to be four types of knowledge that are likely to affect how selective the benefit is that we are returning to another:

General Knowledge is knowledge of what people in general across a broad number of contexts desire, want, or need. For example, individuals generally want or need such things as food, money, and clothing. This involves awareness of the class of social and economic reinforcers that have been discussed elsewhere (Buss, 1983; Foa & Foa, 1974).
Person-Specific Knowledge is knowledge that involves knowing what a particular individual desires, wants or needs. For example, we know that a best friend generally likes to receive yellow roses or that a parent prefers receiving antiques over receiving a trip as a present.

Context-Specific Knowledge is knowledge that involves knowing what most individuals want or desire in a particular context. For example, speakers who are giving a talk generally would enjoy having a glass of water handy. This is a context in which a glass of water would be highly desired.

Person/Context-Specific Knowledge involves knowledge of what a particular individual would especially desire, need or want in a specific context. One woman we know likes to have her husband rub her stomach when she is anxious and she and her husband are alone in a private place. However, she doesn’t like to have her stomach rubbed under any other circumstances.

General knowledge and context-specific knowledge both seem to tap into normative knowledge about what to give another in general or in specific contexts (e.g., most people in this context would prefer, like or need “x”). Person-specific knowledge and person/context-specific knowledge involve knowing specific information about particular individuals’ preferences (that diverge from general preferences): information that is more detailed than general knowledge. Because most individuals in a given culture are likely to be aware of that culture’s norms, individual differences and degree of relationship with a particular other are apt to be most relevant when what a particular individual desires or wants diverges from or is more detailed than the average “normative” benefit. For example, we might expect that as they spend more time with another, and as the relationship develops, roommates should become better at discovering and meeting each other’s needs. Berg (in press) found precisely that in a recent study. Furthermore, as self-disclosure to one’s roommate (one index of supplying person-specific knowledge about oneself to another) increased, so too did both the total number of benefits subjects received and the number of times they received those benefits that they most wanted.

Attributions Made For Initial Benefit

Our perceptions of the other’s characteristics and motives for providing benefits, as well as the nature of the relationship also affect the benefit we select. Why has the other provided us with a benefit in the first place? In the course of day-to-day interactions with others, people
whom we barely know, as well as strangers and close friends, may bestow “benefits” upon us. They may provide us with money, compliments, a seat in a bus, a match, directions downtown or an umbrella in a rainstorm. What do we make of these benefits? Is the salesman giving us a road atlas because he really wants us to buy an auto from his lot? Is this student paying us a compliment because he or she hopes to get a better grade in a course? In short, we need to interpret the giving behavior of the other.

Three classes of giving behavior can be identified. First, obligatory giving is giving which tends to be normatively based. We tell the hostess the dinner was delicious even though we thought it was horrible. We give a wedding present or birthday present because it is expected that we do so if we attend the affair. Instrumental giving is giving through which the giver hopes to accomplish some goal (e.g., the giver wants you to buy something, or do something for him or her). With this type of giving, providing the recipient with a benefit is an ingratiation technique (cf., Jones, 1964) or a means to an end (e.g., the service, good or information the giver desires to receive in return). A third type of giving is more altruistic: It can be called pleasure-based giving. Someone gives a benefit because he or she enjoys giving benefits to others or feels bad watching someone else in distress. Perhaps for this individual, giving is consistent with a self-concept of being altruistic and giving makes such a person feel good. Another example of pleasure-based giving is giving so that the other will feel good or not incur a harmful or unpleasant experience. When we decide that the nature of the giving falls into one of these three categories, we are likely to make matching inferences about the giver and his or her motives, as indicated in Table 7.1.

When the giver’s behavior falls within boundaries of social norms we would typically assume that the person is simply being polite and thus be unlikely to return a benefit beyond a simple “thank you” or smile. But, once these boundaries are exceeded, then the receiver must decide why he or she is such a recipient. At least one of three inferences are possible: (1) the giver wants something from me in return, (2) the giver is doing this because it makes him or her feel good, or (3) the giver cares about me and my needs.

In the process of making these attributions, individuals must bring to the fore information about the person who provided the benefit (and the category of individuals that this person belongs to), the nature of the relationship that they share with the giver, as well as social information about norms, expectations, and goals. Such information is useful not only in interpreting why others may be bestowing particular benefits,
but also in evaluating such benefits, deciding whether to return a benefit and choosing a specific benefit to return.

Suppose we begin with the characteristics of the individual. If this person is a stranger, we may try to determine first if the motive for giving is likely to be instrumental. We may look to see if they are trying to sell us something. Or, we may consider the individual’s occupation (e.g., is the person an insurance agent). Because of our past experiences with members of particular categories and our stereotypes about certain groups of individuals, we may decide that simply knowing that an individual is a member of a certain category (e.g., an insurance agent) makes their giving behavior suspect. That is, even if they don’t mention insurance, we may suspect that a new neighbor who is an insurance agent and who provides us with a benefit (e.g., a welcome mat for our new home) is doing so because he or she is going to try to sell us insurance. Even if we can’t immediately confirm that the giving is instrumentally based, we may continue to be suspicious of this person’s motives, making it difficult to conclude that the giving of the insurance salesman was pleasure-based (e.g., this is a very giving person who likes to help people and make them feel welcome in a community).

What is the result of such attributions? One hypothesis seems reasonable: To the extent that we decide that the benefactor’s giving behavior is instrumentally based, we are less likely to be selective if we return a benefit and perhaps even less likely to return a benefit (Brehm & Cole,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Giving type</th>
<th>Perceived goal of other</th>
<th>Likely attribution concerning the other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obligatory</td>
<td>to be polite</td>
<td>person is courteous (normative behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>other wants you to do something</td>
<td>Person is Machiavellian, manipulative, aggressive. You are only a means to an end for the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure-based</td>
<td>providing benefit makes the person feel good or avoid feeling bad or having an unpleasant experience to make you feel good</td>
<td>person is kind, altruistic, giving Person is a good friend, and cares about you personally, or is an empathic person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1966) than we are when we decide that the giving is more pleasure-based. Given the same benefit, we are probably also more apt to like someone who provides us with a benefit we perceive as pleasure-based than one we perceive as instrumentally based.

What happens when the person who has benefited us is a friend, acquaintance or someone we know something about through a mutual acquaintance or friend? In such cases, we would be expected to use this knowledge in making attributions for his or her giving behavior. It is also likely that with friends we start out with the presumption that they are providing a benefit because of the type of person they are or because of our relationship with them (i.e., an attribution of pleasure-based giving). We feel disappointed and even angered if we discover that the benefit was instrumentally based instead. Consider what happens when a friend or relative invites us to come over for a party. We arrive, expecting that we will receive a benefit (dinner and a relaxing evening) because our friends enjoy our company and they wish to make us feel good, only to discover that this is an Amway party, where we are going to be asked to look at various goods for sale and possibly listen to a lecture to get us to become distributors of this product. Even though our friends have provided a benefit (dinner) we may decide that we do not have to stay around for the “demo” and we may not feel we need to return a benefit. We may feel that our friends have taken advantage of our friendship and that such instrumentally based giving suggests that we may not be the friends we thought we were.

The manner in which the nature of the relationship may affect reactions to receiving a benefit has been described in detail by Clark (1983). We will discuss the manner in which Clark’s views relate to the issue of selectivity in more detail later in the section dealing with communal and exchange relationships. Here we would only note that Clark and Mills (1979) provide evidence suggesting that if a benefit received from a friend is perceived as a case of obligatory giving, attraction for the giver may decline.

The attribution made by a recipient may also be affected by the giver’s selection of a benefit. Was the resource given something that required a large amount of the donor’s time and/or resources? To what degree was the benefit received selective and/or personalistic? Did the recipient specifically request that particular benefit?

If the benefit received is perceived to have required more of the donor’s time and/or resources or if the recipient explicitly requested some benefit, a greater feeling of obligation and indebtedness (Greenberg, 1980) is likely to result. The recipient may then feel a greater sense of urgency to return some benefit. This may be especially likely when the
relationship between giver and recipient is not a close one. It is also possible, however, that a personalistic benefit (i.e., one perceived by a recipient as specifically intended for him or her), that is given too soon in a relationship might arouse reactance (Brehm & Cole, 1966; Worcel, Andreoll, & Archer, 1976). In this case it would be less likely that a recipient would reciprocate a benefit. The previously mentioned reactions would seem to be less likely when the resource is given by a close friend (Nadler, Fisher, & Streufert, 1974, 1976). In communal relationships, such as those between close friends, there is an obligation to attempt to meet the needs of the other. Giving the resource would be attributed to the relationship between donor and recipient and the recipient should not feel any new obligation unless the donor has incurred a need in the course of providing that benefit (Clark, 1983). A result that is likely to occur is that the recipient should now feel more confident about the relationship with the other and may experience an increased sense of commitment to that relationship.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN SELECTIVITY

Obtaining Knowledge of Others

Presumably, the longer we have known someone, the more selective is our choice of a benefit for them, in general, because we have access to additional categories of knowledge concerning the other (e.g., person-specific and person/context-specific information). In addition, we have more time and therefore more opportunities to give selectively. Even so, among individuals who have known a given other for the same period of time, some people are simply better at choosing benefits that are more desired, needed, or wanted. What individual differences might affect the extent to which individuals are knowledgeable about specific benefits to give particular others under varying contexts?

Although this discussion is speculative, in that there is little data with which to address these issues, it seems reasonable that one factor involves individual differences in attentiveness to what others are saying in conversations: more attentive individuals should acquire more knowledge about others. In fact, some recent research suggests that individuals do vary considerably in how attentive they believe they are when others are conversing (Miller & Mueller, 1983) and these differences are related to what individuals can accurately remember about conversations that they have heard. In one study, undergraduates at
Northern Illinois University first indicated the extent to which they felt that they were attentive listeners, responding to such items as "I listen attentively to the conversations of others". Then these undergraduates watched a videotape of a woman being interviewed. After the interview tape, subjects were asked to indicate how confident they were that the woman being interviewed had said or not said each of 40 statements (20 of which had been said). There was a significant relationship between reported attentiveness to conversations (conversational attentiveness) and ability to remember accurately what was said during the 10-minute videotape. Greater attentiveness during conversations should increase the likelihood that individuals will encode and later be able to remember preferences, desires, and needs that were stated during the conversation. Other research also suggests that other individual differences may affect the ability to remember conversations accurately. One of these characteristics includes vividness of visual imagery (Swann & Miller, 1982). Individuals who score higher on Mark's Visual Imagery Scale (Mark, 1973), were more accurate at remembering what was said during a conversation when they saw the interactant compared to those low in vividness of imagery.

Some individuals may be more knowledgeable about others because they encourage or are able to get others to disclose more about themselves. One relevant individual difference measure involves the Opener Scale (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983). Items on this measure include, "I've been told that I'm a good listener" and "I easily get people to 'open up'". Individuals who endorse items on this scale have been found to elicit more disclosure from both strangers in the lab (Miller et al., 1983, Study 2) and acquaintances and friends in the field (Miller et al., 1983, Study 3). Recent work suggests that high Openers may be more responsive (in the sense that they provide speakers with nonverbal encouragements such as backchannel communications, smiles and eye contact) than low Openers (Purvis, Dabbs, & Hopper, 1981) and it seems likely that this differential responsiveness of Openers partially accounts for their tendency to elicit more intimate disclosure from their partners. In any event, because high Openers elicit more intimate disclosures from their partners, high Openers are apt to know more about their partners than low Openers. A second relevant measure involves individual differences in the tendency to self-disclose. Individuals who are themselves high disclosers may encourage their partners to disclose in turn (Jourard & Resnick, 1970). High disclosers then might have more knowledge of others because others tell them more intimate things. A third personality characteristic that seems relevant here is sociability. More sociable individuals would be expected (by definition) to have a
wider circle of friends and acquaintances and thus would be more apt to secure specific knowledge about an individual through their network of friends and associates. Furthermore, one important aspect of sociability is warmth (Buss & Plomin, 1975) which should enhance perceived responsiveness. In a similar vein, the “expressivity scale” (formally the femininity scale) devised by Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp (1974) includes items that ask subjects to judge the extent to which they are “kind,” “warm” and “willing to devote themselves to others.” Individuals who score high on this dimension may be especially concerned with choosing a benefit that meets the other's needs.

On the other hand, some characteristics of persons may detract from or inhibit learning about others' needs and desires. Shyness and audience anxiety seem likely candidates. Shy individuals may be so worried about what they are saying that they may attend less to what others are saying. Support for this notion comes from a recent study by Stafford and Daly (1983). In that study, individuals who scored high on an audience apprehension measure were less likely to recall information about what was said during a conversation than individuals who scored low on the apprehension measure.

Resources Available

Several personality variables are relevant concerning the resources individuals have available to give to others. Regarding affiliative resources, more sociable individuals may be better at giving companionship than less sociable individuals. Openers may be better at listening to others and seem to be more responsive listeners (Miller, 1982; Purvis et al., 1981). In terms of specific skills, more creative, intelligent, and athletic individuals may have more resources available to them than less creative and talented individuals. Also, some individuals may be especially likely to achieve and receive higher salaries and thus acquire a greater pool of possible resources to provide to others. For example, Helmreich and Spence (1978) found that individuals who have higher levels of two components of achievement motivation (work and mastery) and lower levels of a third component (competitiveness) may be more likely to receive higher salaries (and possibly achieve higher status).

Motivation

Generally speaking then, individuals with greater resources are better able to be selective in their choice of benefits to bestow on others. Sup-
pose we know what someone else needs, we have the resources to meet the need but we lack the motivation to give the resource. Perhaps we feel we can't afford the benefit. Others may be reluctant to provide a benefit that might aid a perceived competitor. For example, suppose two colleagues are working on a similar problem. One has an insight or gains access to a new resource (e.g., a subject pool that the other is unaware of). Does the one colleague provide the other with the new resource? Colleagues who are more cooperative may be more apt to share scarce professional resources. Colleagues who are more competitive may choose alternative benefits that would be unrelated to productivity. They may offer rides or provide dinners but not scarce professional resources.

It also seems likely that we will provide a benefit to another when we especially like him or her. Prior research suggests that some individuals (those high in private self-consciousness) are particularly aware of their feelings (Scheier, 1976). Thus, liking for another should be particularly salient for them. Perhaps, such salient liking for others could increase the likelihood that individuals high in private self-consciousness will provide more benefits (perhaps more selective benefits) to those whom they most like.

Individuals high in public self-consciousness seem particularly concerned about how they appear to others (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Such individuals may be more "conservative" in their choice of benefits for another. That is, they may adopt allocation rules that are more absolute, making sure that they return a benefit that is as valuable as the one they received and perhaps being more concerned about how the gift might look to others. For example, suppose a guest at a wedding has to choose between two equally expensive presents. One is a sterling fork and knife in the bride's pattern and the second is a silverplated coffee and tea service. The guest knows that the bride requested the sterling fork and knife, but somehow the coffee service is a more impressive gift. One would expect individuals who are particularly concerned about "how they look" to choose benefits for others that (1) will fit in with social norms, and (2) are apt to be viewed favorably by others.

Some individuals may also find being with others and interacting with them particularly rewarding. For example, those who are especially sociable may be more motivated to give resources to others because they find the presence of others rewarding. Other personality characteristics may predict reduced likelihood of providing benefits to others. For example, because they are afraid of appearing silly, individuals who are high in fear of embarrassment have been found to be less likely to help than those who are low in such fear (McGovern, 1974). It seems likely
that individuals high in various types of social anxiety might be motivated to avoid providing benefits when there is the threat of potential embarrassment or they might provide benefits that would be more "normative" or conservative and thus probably less selective.

Whether we choose to give or withhold benefits may depend in part on how we view ourselves. Individuals who view themselves as altruistic may be especially motivated to help because to do so helps to maintain their self-concept. The notion that individuals attempt to maintain their self-conceptions by engaging in behaviors consistent with that self-concept has received recent empirical support when applied to such characteristics as extroversion and assertiveness (Swann & Hill, 1982; Swann & Read, 1981).

Additional Factors

Individuals may also differ in their reactions to benefits they receive from another. Some individuals may be pleased, others distressed and uncomfortable, perhaps even angry. Partially, such reactions may depend upon how individuals interpret the giving behavior of the other. In general, if the giving behavior is judged to be pleasure-based we would expect individuals to react positively. If the giving is perceived to be instrumentally based, however, individuals may react with a variety of feelings. They may feel manipulated or decide that their freedom of choice has been curtailed (e.g., I allowed that salesman to give me a car, now I have to buy something). Such attributions, therefore may easily affect individuals' reactions to benefits. This is especially likely to be the case for individuals high in private self-consciousness who are particularly aware of their thoughts and feelings. Such individuals have been shown to react especially negatively for example, to attempts to coerce them (Gibbons, Scheier, Carver & Hornuth, 1979) and to experience affect more strongly (Scheier, 1976). In addition, it seems likely that some individuals are more apt than others (especially in ambiguous situations) to assume that the motives of the other are instrumental and not pleasure-based. Individuals who are themselves highly competitive may question why a worker in their office has offered to share some "inside information" with them or (in the extreme) why this person is even friendly toward them. Individuals who are themselves competitive (perhaps Machiavellian as well) may assume that others function in a similar way. In one prisoner's dilemma game, for example, whether they choose to compete or cooperate, individuals
expected that their partner would behave the way they behaved (Messe & Sivacek, 1979). Other research (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970) has shown that competitive individuals are especially likely to do this.

While the issue of fairness in social exchange is discussed in detail in the section on related concepts, regarding individual differences it appears that some individuals may react negatively to receiving a benefit because they may feel that the relationship is no longer equitable until they have returned a similar benefit. Such individuals may be particularly distressed if, when given the context and other constraints, they cannot reciprocate with an equivalent benefit. A personality dimension that might be related to such a negative reaction is self-esteem. Individuals high in self-esteem seem to react negatively to aid from others (Nadler, Altman, & Fisher, 1979), compared to those who are low in self-esteem. While receiving a benefit is different from receiving aid (aid implies one requires help and can't handle the situation, while a benefit doesn't necessarily imply this), individuals high in self-esteem might react to both situations in a similar way. After all, someone is offering the individual a benefit. If he or she cannot return a benefit of equal value than that might be a blow to the high self-esteem individual (e.g., if I can't return an equal benefit maybe I'm not as good).

This line of reasoning also suggests that an individual high in self-esteem might feel a more urgent need to repay a benefit as soon as possible since such an individual would not want to feel that he or she was "in debt" to someone else. Individuals who feel a greater need or urgency to repay benefits, as suggested earlier, may be less selective in their choice of a benefit to return or give another because they may allow themselves a relatively small time frame. As the time frame for choosing a benefit decreases, options for benefit choice within that time frame are expected to be reduced. This in turn is expected to reduce the selectivity of the benefit chosen.

However, some individuals may choose the opposite extreme course of action with respect to choosing a benefit. They may keep extending the time frame, hoping that they will find an even more selective benefit as time goes by. Such a strategy has a serious drawback—the individual (trying to find that truly "selective" benefit) may wait so long that it would seem inappropriate to return a benefit. For example, it might seem appropriate to send someone a gourmet cheese basket thanking them for a night's lodging a week after having received the benefit, but not 10 years after receiving the benefit. On the other hand, if we provided our hosts with a room in an unexpected emergency 10 years later, that would be a highly selective benefit and would probably be viewed as more selective than giving the cheese a week after receiving the
lodging. In short, we have to eventually choose something as a suitable benefit, or else we may risk not being able to provide a suitable benefit at all. The appropriate time frame for providing a less selective benefit (cheese) may pass and it may be unlikely that we will ever be able to provide the more selective benefit (emergency lodging).

RELATED CONCEPTS ABOUT SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Notions of selectivity and urgency can be seen as closely related to and intertwined with previous concepts in the social exchange literature. In the following section, we focus on four such concepts: (1) the distinction between communal and exchange relationships, (2) reciprocity and the stage of relationship development, (3) norms governing fairness in exchange and allocation of resources and (4) the concept of responsiveness. In linking each of these concepts with selectivity and urgency, we also, whenever feasible, attempt to integrate other concepts in the social exchange literature into our discussion.

Communal and Exchange Relationships

As described by Clark and Mills (e.g., Clark & Mills, 1979; Mills & Clark, 1982), communal relationships correspond to those that would generally be considered close (e.g., relationships between family members, romantic partners and good friends). Exchange relationships are more formal and distant (e.g., casual acquaintanceships, student-teacher and proprietor-customer relationships). Clark and Mills (1979) propose that reactions to receiving a resource from another will differ, depending on whether the recipient views the relationship as an exchange relationship or a communal one. In exchange relationships, a benefit is given to another either in order to repay him or her for a benefit that was previously received or with the firm expectation that the recipient will repay the benefit in the near future. In communal relationships, a benefit is given to another because he or she needs or strongly desires that resource and there is no concomitant obligation for repayment in the absence of a need on the part of the original giver.

The giving of resources or benefits is thus seen as operating in accordance with different rules in communal and exchange relationships. If a
participant does not act in accordance with the principle appropriate for the type of relationship he or she has with the other, this is expected to result in a decrease in attraction for that person and negative consequences for the relationship. Clark and Mills (1979) tested this idea in two separate experiments. In the first, they found that when “givers” anticipated a communal relationship with the other, they felt less attraction for a recipient who immediately repayed them for their gift than for a recipient who did not repay the original resource. However, if an exchange relationship was anticipated, greater attraction was expressed for a recipient who did make prompt repayment than for one who did not. In a second study, Clark and Mills (1979) investigated the effect of a request for the repayment of previously given aid. Here, subjects either did or did not receive aid from another person with whom they anticipated having either an exchange or a communal relationship. Following this, the other either did or did not ask the subject to provide her with a resource. When subjects expected an exchange relationship, falling to ask for repayment when aid had been given and asking for a resource when aid had not been given resulted in lower attraction for the other. When a communal relationship with the other was expected, the subject liked her less when she did request repayment after providing aid. If subjects had not received aid but expected a communal relationship, attraction was equivalent in the request and the no-request conditions. In both cases, however, attraction was greater than if the other had both aided subjects and asked for repayment. This pair of studies indicates that expectations regarding the type of relationship one has with another (exchange or communal) do affect how individuals evaluate the exchange behaviors of others.

It is expected that recipients in exchange relationships are primarily concerned with repaying a benefit as soon as possible while those in a communal relationship are primarily concerned with meeting the needs of the other. In comparing the concepts of selectivity and urgency with the distinction between exchange and communal relationships, an obvious parallel emerges: exchange relationships should be most influenced by feelings of urgency and communal relationships should be most influenced by selectivity (e.g., meeting the needs of the other). Quickly returning a benefit is not, however, necessarily incompatible with communal exchanges. In general, immediate return may be less likely because a quickly returned benefit is apt to be less selective. But, if the returned benefit did meet a need of the other, rapid repayment should be viewed as very appropriate.

Preliminary evidence on the above point is provided by Miller (1983). Miller’s data suggest that individuals who immediately return a highly
Selective benefit are viewed more favorably than individuals who had an opportunity to provide the highly selective and needed benefit (a sharpened pencil for an exam) but who instead returned either the same resource which they had previously received or no resource at all. In comparison, when individuals did not have an opportunity to choose a selective benefit (there was no exam in which a pencil was badly needed), not providing any resource was viewed more positively than providing either a similar or nonsimilar (pencil) resource. The latter condition conceptually replicates a finding of Clark and Mills (1979, Experiment 1) described earlier. Miller's findings strongly suggest that the emphasis in communal relationships is on selectivity (meeting the needs of the other) whenever one has the opportunity to do so regardless of the timing of such return.

It should be pointed out that there is not a complete parallel between the concepts of selectivity and urgency and the distinction between exchange and communal relationships. As Miller's (1983) study indicates, immediate provision of a selective benefit is quite appropriate. One may also be quite selective in other than communal relationships. We might be particularly selective, for example in picking out a gift for a boss not because we have a communal relationship with him or her, but because we wish to ingratiate ourselves.

In relating the distinction between exchange and communal relationships to other social exchange approaches, several points emerge. First, the findings of Clark and Mills (1979) for subjects anticipating an exchange relationship with their partner are in accordance with and replicate past research on equity (e.g., Gergen, Ellsworth, Maslach, & Siegel, 1975). Also Clark (1983) notes that persons involved in communal relationships will be more interdependent than those in exchange relationships. It is also expected that those in communal relationships may receive intrinsic rewards from the relationship itself and from the act of benefiting the other. This expectation is consistent with Kelley's (1979) view that persons in close relationships will often choose to behave in ways that provide maximal benefit to the partner or to the pair and consistent with Foa and Foa's (1974, 1976) proposal that the provision of the most particularistic resource, love, entails giving to oneself as well as giving to the other.

A point of departure from Foa and Foa's theory concerns the effect of giving a similar resource to a previous benefactor. Research conducted in the framework of resource theory (Foa & Foa, 1976; Turner, Foa, & Foa, 1971) suggests that people will prefer to receive the same or a similar resource after having given a resource to another. However, Clark (1981) has provided evidence suggesting that the provision of the
same or a similar benefit is viewed as more likely in exchange relationships than in communal ones. She, therefore, speculates that if a person desires a communal relationship, receiving a resource similar to the one he or she initially provided may decrease attraction for the other because it implies that the other neither views the relationship as communal nor wishes it to become communal. The finding of Miller (1983) that more positive impressions were formed of a recipient who returned a dissimilar but needed resource than of one who returned a similar but less-selective resource strongly supports Clark’s view.

Some additional attention should be given to the question of why, in communal relationships, returning a resource that does not help satisfy some need results in less attraction than if the other returns no benefit at all. (Clark & Mills, 1979). While one possibility is that the expectations of the original giver have been violated, additional possibilities are suggested by considering concurrently related notions of selectivity, equity, and the time available to a recipient. According to Mills and Clark (1982), in order for a communal relationship to exist, partners must anticipate future interaction. Keeping this in mind, consider a donor who has provided his or her partner with a highly selective (needed) resource. When the recipient quickly returns something that is of equal objective value but does not satisfy a need of the original donor, has equity really been maintained in the relationship? On the one hand, you might argue that of course the exchange was equitable because the objective value of the resources exchanged was equal. On the other hand, it would also appear that the original benefit was “special.” It was highly selective and addressed an important need of the recipient. The returned benefit, however, was not “special.” It was not selected to meet a need of the other. Thus the original benefactor may feel inequitably treated, since the relationship has the potential to be long lasting (communal). The recipient certainly could have had the opportunity in the future to provide a more selective and needed resource. The immediate return implied that any obligation has been repaid but in terms of the degree to which each person’s needs are likely to be met, the exchange was inequitable. Distinguishing between equity in terms of the “objective” value of the benefits each partner provides the other and equity in terms of the extent to which each attempts to meet the other’s needs may help to resolve the controversy between those theorists who feel that equity considerations do not apply to those persons who have a close intimate relationship (e.g., Murstein, MacDonald, & Cerreto; 1977; Rubin, 1973) and those who view equity as an integral component of both close and casual relationships (e.g., Walster et al., 1973; Hatfield et al., 1979).
Reciprocity and the Stage of a Relationship

The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) has perhaps been most employed in investigations of disclosure reciprocity. As noted at the start of the chapter, a great deal of research indicates that a recipient of intimate disclosure from another tends to make an intimate self-disclosure in return (e.g., Archer & Berg, 1978; Czubry, 1972; Derlega & Chaikin, 1976; Derlega et al., 1973; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; Jourard, 1959; Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969). Also as noted earlier, while several explanations for disclosure reciprocity have been proposed, the explanation that has received the most experimental support involves social exchange and normative considerations (see Archer, 1979). This view assumes that when one person discloses intimate information to another, the recipient incurs an obligation to return self-disclosure of a comparable intimacy level (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Derlega et al., 1973).

In comparing the concept of disclosure reciprocity to related approaches, several assumptions are made. First, it is assumed that self-disclosure represents a resource (Foa & Foa, 1974, 1976) and that exchanges of this resource follow rules similar to those involved in exchanges of other resources. Intimate disclosure, like other resources, may be returned after receiving intimate disclosure in order to discharge an obligation. Just as equity and immediate reciprocation of goods are most often found in initial encounters (see Walster et al., 1973) there seems to be a similar pattern for exchanges of self-disclosure in initial encounters. When one partner discloses intimately, the other immediately reciprocates. And just as providing the other with needed goods rather than immediate reciprocation appears to be the goal in long-term communal relationships, so, too, disclosures in long-term relationships may be more concerned with meeting the other’s needs or enhancing the relationship than with reciprocity per se and discharging obligations (Altman, 1973). This analysis would suggest that disclosure reciprocity would be more immediate between those with a short-term as compared to a long-term relationship and is consistent with the available evidence comparing the degree of disclosure reciprocity shown by strangers to that exhibited by friends (Derlega, Wilson, & Chaikin, 1976) and by spouses (Morton, 1978).

Because of a lessened need for immediate reciprocation, and the expanded time-frame of the relationship, participants in established relationships may be more selective in choosing their responses to a partner’s disclosure. At times, the other’s needs might be best met by following the issue or topic he or she raised through to some conclusion.
At other times needs might best be met by simply being attentive and encouraging, and at other times by expressing support and sympathy, if appropriate. Research by Berg and Archer (1980) suggests that this latter possibility may be preferable to a reciprocal self-disclosure even in initial encounters.

Altman (1973) suggests that the intimacy of a received disclosure will interact with the stage of a relationship to determine the likelihood of disclosure reciprocity. He suggests that reciprocation of nonintimate disclosure will be maximal during the early stages of a relationship and then decline steadily as the relationship develops. For intimate disclosure, reciprocity is expected to be greatest during the middle stages, when people think they may want to become closer but have not as yet developed full trust in one another. Should individuals receive a disclosure that is extremely intimate early in the relationship, they may experience a reactance-like effect with a corresponding decrease in reciprocity (Archer & Berg, 1978; Archer & Burleson, 1980). It would seem likely that in the early stages of a relationship, extremity of any type (e.g., extremely valuable presents) may prove threatening. Furthermore, the recipient of such resources may feel that the donor has violated social norms by giving an inappropriate gift. The recipient may then feel less bound him- or herself by these social norms to reciprocate. If the recipient is unable or unwilling to reciprocate, psychological equity might be achieved by derogating the donor (Walster et al., 1973). Alternatively, he or she might refuse to accept such an extreme gift although it is possible to still feel obligated to reciprocate in some way. Barring extremity in received resources, it does, however, appear that feelings of urgency and immediate reciprocation will be more likely in the formative stages of a relationship than in the later ones.

Fairness in Social Exchange

The desire that the balance of exchange and the distribution of joint resources be fair may often be the force behind a feeling of urgency in social exchanges. We wish to pay back our obligations as soon as possible. But how do we determine that our exchanges are fair? At first glance, it might seem that the question of fairness is relatively easy to determine. An application of the norm of reciprocity or the equity principal would seem a rather straightforward way to make any decisions regarding fairness and what a given participant deserves to receive. However, it should be apparent that strict reciprocity or equity is not the
only nor necessarily the most appropriate standard to apply in deciding these questions. In communal relationships, for example, there is no obligation to maintain a balance in the number of benefits that participants provide one another. Berg (in press) demonstrated that roommates did not match each other in terms of the total number of benefits they provided their partner as their relationship became extended in time. Berg and Archer (1980) found that expressing concern for another was seen as a more appropriate response than reciprocal disclosure.

Kelley (1979), Foa and Foa (1980) and Clark (1983) have all noted that a benefactor may derive significant rewards from the act of benefiting the other. The fact that the benefit provided may be needed (selective) should add additional subjective value for both recipient and benefactor. In Foa and Foa’s framework, the value of a resource may depend on who is providing that resource. When one begins to consider the subjective states of recipients and benefactors, the identity of the benefactor, and the alternative options that were available, the issue of what constitutes fairness becomes much more complex.

It appears likely that a set of rules or norms exists that will govern exchange in social relationships at different times. Scanzoni (1979) notes that these may either have the status of moral norms that exist prior to and are then brought into a particular interaction or they may arise in the course of interaction and later become linked up with other sets of norms that do have the status of moral principles. In either case, Scanzoni notes that the existence of such norms may simplify the exchange process by eliminating the need for continual bargaining and negotiation. They also will set limits on what may be exchanged, how much may be exchanged, and how existing resources should be allocated.

Leventhal (1976, 1980) describes three rules governing the exchange and allocation of benefits and resources that may be applied in social situations. The first of these, which he refers to as a contributions rule, is very similar to the principle of equity, prescribing that individuals receive benefits in proportion to the degree they have contributed to a relationship. A second principle, the equality rule, would prescribe that all participants in an interaction share equally in the benefits derived from that interaction regardless of their contributions. Finally, Leventhal notes a third principle, the needs rule, which would prescribe that people receive those benefits which they need regardless of their contributions.

How do people decide how much weight to give to a particular rule or which rule to apply? When productivity is an issue, a contributions rule will often be viewed as most applicable (Deutsch, 1975). When cohesiveness or cooperation are overriding concerns, the equality rule may be given greater weight. Some evidence suggests that individuals will
indeed allocate resources more on the basis of an equality than a contributions rule when they focus attention on the group rather than on themselves (Giuliano & Wegner, 1981). Several psychologists have suggested that as relationships become closer people will come to view themselves as a unit (e.g., Hatfield & Sprecher, 1983; Levinger, 1979; Wegner & Giuliano, 1982) thinking of themselves in terms of "we" and "us" rather than "me" and "you." When people come to view themselves as a single unit, the needs rule may be more frequently used and more appropriate than either an equality or a contributions rule. Some research provides indirect evidence for this view. For example, Clark and Mills (1979) found that in communal relationships, returning a benefit or requesting that a benefit be returned in the absence of any need resulted in a decrease in attraction. Similarly, Clark (1982) found that individuals who had an exchange relationship were more likely than those in communal relationships to keep track of individual contributions to a joint task, presumably expecting rewards to be allocated using a contributions rule.

The above three rules can all be applied reasonably well to situations in which people must allocate resources from a common pool. However when there is no common resource pool, while use of the needs rule can be distinguished, the difference between an equality and a contributions rule begins to blur. Thus if a friend gives you a sweater, are you applying a contributions rule or an equality rule if you also give him or her a sweater? Which would be in effect if you had given a pair of pants? In addition, in exchanges of this type another rule may be distinguished: a proportions rule. Using this type of rule, individuals would return a resource to another that, in proportion to their available supply, is as valuable or uses up as much of this supply as the received resource took from the supply of the initial giver. Such a rule would be most applicable when there are major differences in personal resources between two individuals (e.g., between one brother who has a job and one who does not or between a parent and child).

Responsiveness

Broadly defined, responsiveness can be viewed as the extent to which and the way in which one participant's actions address the previous actions, communications, needs, or wishes of another participant in that interaction. Responsiveness then is a dyadic construct. In order to be considered responsive, an action must be both intended by the actor and
perceived by the recipient to be based on the past behavior or concerns of that recipient. This requirement helps to distinguish actions that are responsive from actions that are responses. A behavior that is automatically elicited by another's previous action (e.g., saying "bless you" when someone sneezes) is viewed as a response. A behavior that is not automatically elicited by the other's previous behavior but which addresses that behavior (e.g., offering to share your umbrella when the other sneezes) may be seen as responsive. However, in order to be considered responsive, the action must also be perceived by the recipient as addressing his or her past behavior or concerns. If the other perceives the offer to share an umbrella as stemming from a desire to get close enough to pick his pocket instead of a concern that he stay dry, the offer can hardly be considered responsive. While this is an extreme example to be sure, the same point regarding a recipient's perception was made by Davis and Perkowitz (1979) when they stated that "responsiveness is in the ear of the beholder" (p. 535).

Responsiveness is a concept that was alluded to by Kelley (1979) when he spoke of exchange partners exhibiting responsiveness to one another's outcomes and by Clark and Mills (1979) when they suggested that communal relationships operate according to a norm of mutual responsiveness. The concept of responsiveness has also been employed in understanding exchanges of self-disclosure (e.g., Berg & Archer, 1980, 1982, in press; Davis & Perkowitz, 1978; Miller et al., 1983). In this section, we will address the manner in which the concept of responsiveness may be employed in understanding social exchanges and the manner in which it may aid in understanding a person's selection of a commodity to be returned in an exchange.

In attempting to conceptualize responsiveness, we have considered two classes of responsiveness that have as their focal point either the conversation (conversational responsiveness) or the patterns of exchanges between participants over the course of a relationship (relational responsiveness). In addition to these two classes of responsiveness, we have also considered three ways in which responsiveness can be manifested given either class of responsiveness. These three aspects of responsiveness include (1) style of responsiveness (how individuals respond), (2) timing of responsive behaviors, and (3) what individuals do in the act of being responsive and why individuals are performing the behavior (i.e., the goals of the participants).

**Classes of Responsive Behaviors**

Two broad classes of responsive behaviors may be distinguished: communicative, or conversational, responsiveness and relational respon-
siveness (Berg, 1983). Conversational responsiveness refers to behaviors made by the recipient of another’s communication through which the recipient indicates interest in and understanding of that communication. Davis (1982) notes three implicit demands of communication situations and defines responsiveness in terms of how well these demands are met. The three demands are (1) that the recipient of another’s communication respond in some way, (2) that this response address the content of the other’s preceding communication, and (3) that the response be of an appropriate degree of elaboration. Conversational responsiveness may be indicated and these demands met in a number of ways. Verbal behaviors have perhaps been the most studied of these. Reciprocal self-disclosure may represent a means by which a response of appropriate elaboration (intimacy) is indicated. Disclosure on the same subject matter would address the content of the other’s communication. Verbal behaviors, though, are not the only ways in which responsiveness may be indicated. Both nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact and the use of backchannel communicators (e.g., uh-huh) can convey interest in and understanding of another’s communication and would seem to fall under the first of the demands Davis distinguishes, that the recipient respond in some way.

The second general class of responsiveness is termed relational responsiveness and refers to behaviors involving the attainment or distribution of rewards through which a person demonstrates that he or she is concerned with and is taking account of another’s outcomes and needs. A distinction between the present view and that of Clark and Mills is that we explicitly assume that responsiveness is a characteristic of interactions in general and may occur in what Clark and Mills term exchange relationships as well as in what they would call communal ones. While responsiveness may foster the development of close or communal relationships, the questions of whether it does this—and when—are ones that must be addressed through future research.

Davis (Davis, 1982; Davis & Perkowitz, 1979) has also distinguished a number of consequences expected to follow from responsive actions. Perhaps the most important of these consequences are that responsive actions are expected to result in an increase in attraction for the person performing them and to lead to the maintenance of interactions with that person. It is expected that conversational and relational responsiveness will be affected by the characteristics of the interactants, the nature of the situation, and the prior behaviors of each partner.

**Conversational Responsiveness**

Davis and Perkowitz (1979) investigated the effect of variations in the extent to which a confederate responded to a subject’s communication
and the extent to which the confederate's response addressed the content of the subject's communication. In both cases, it was found that as responsiveness increased, attraction for the confederate increased. A study reported by Berg and Archer (1980) also indicates the beneficial effect responsiveness may have on attraction. In this study, subjects read an account of a first encounter between two women. One of the women made either an intimate or nonintimate disclosure to which the second replied with an intimate disclosure, a nonintimate disclosure, or a statement of concern that expressed sympathy and a willingness to pursue the issues the first woman had raised. In terms of Davis' (1982) criteria for responsive interactions, a returned disclosure (of comparable intimacy to the one received) may be viewed as a "response of appropriate elaboration." Consistent with this view and with earlier work on disclosure reciprocity (e.g., Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; Worthy et al. 1969), subjects reported greater attraction for the nonintimate respondent when the initial disclosure was nonintimate. When the initial disclosure had been intimate, greater attraction was expressed for the intimate than the nonintimate respondent. What was more interesting, however, was that for both intimate and nonintimate initial disclosures the statement of concern resulted in the greatest attraction for the respondent. The concern response may be seen as both an appropriate degree of elaboration and as addressing the content of the first woman's communication. It would thus be considered more responsive.

The results of the Berg and Archer (1980) study suggest that responsiveness may take a number of forms in an interaction and further suggests as a working hypothesis that attraction will be greatest when responsiveness is maximal, regardless of the form such responsiveness takes. Further support for the latter point comes from an additional experiment (Berg & Archer, in press). In this study, subjects first disclosed on moderately intimate topics to an experimental confederate. The confederate's response either was or was not of an appropriate degree of elaboration (intimate) and either did or did not concern itself with the same subject matter as the original communication. As predicted, attraction for the confederate was greatest when her response did both of these.

The following two sections discuss research dealing with responsiveness and interaction goals and characteristics of the respondent. Although these factors are assumed to be relevant to both conversational and relational responsiveness, the research to date has focused only on their effects on conversational responsiveness.
Responsiveness and Interaction Goals

The research reviewed up to this point might seem to indicate that the particular way a person demonstrates responsiveness may vary little from one situation to another and matter even less. Berg and Archer’s 1982 study, however, suggests that one’s interaction goals may dramatically affect both the nature of the responsive behavior and the extent to which it occurs. Berg and Archer considered three aspects of a reply to another’s self-disclosure that could be viewed as responsive: (1) descriptive intimacy (Morton, 1978), which refers to the intimacy of the factual information that is revealed in a communication, (2) evaluative intimacy (Morton, 1978), which refers to the depth of the affect the communication expresses, and (3) topical reciprocity, which refers to the degree to which replies to another’s disclosure deal with the same subject matter as the received disclosure. Variations in descriptive and evaluative intimacy represent ways in which responsiveness may be indicated by varying the elaboration of a response while variations in topical reciprocity vary the extent to which the content of preceding communication is addressed.

Berg and Archer (1982) investigated several variations in the situation to determine their effect on the predominant form responsiveness would take. Under one set of conditions the interaction goal involved the exchange of information. Subjects were asked to describe themselves so that their partner could form an accurate impression of them. This set of instructions, similar to those used in the typical disclosure reciprocity experiment, is likely to place a premium on the revelation of facts per se and create a situation in which the interaction goal of subjects is to exchange information. In such conditions the only way subjects may be able to indicate responsiveness while at the same time satisfying the situational demand to relay information would be through a returned disclosure of comparable descriptive intimacy. As expected, descriptive intimacy was found to be more pronounced in this condition than in any other. Moreover, in line with past research (e.g., Derlega et al., 1973; Eillich & Graeven, 1971; Worthy et al., 1969) subjects’ replies contained a greater proportion of descriptively intimate statements when the disclosure they had initially received from a confederate had been intimate than when it had been nonintimate. In contrast, the intimacy of the confederate’s disclosure exerted very little influence on the degree of either evaluative intimacy or topical reciprocity found in subject’s replies in this Information Exchange condition.

When the demand to exchange information was removed by describing the study as an investigation of conversations and suggesting to subjects that they might call to mind past conversations when making
their replies, descriptive intimacy decreased and topical reciprocity became pronounced. When the subjects' interaction goal involved having a conversation, over 80% of the statements made in response to both intimate and nonintimate disclosures dealt with the same content as the original communication. Thus as their interaction goal shifted, subjects focused more on addressing the content of the other's communication. In a third set of conditions, when their interaction goal was to make a positive impression, subjects not only showed the same high levels of topical reciprocity but also demonstrated the greatest degree of matching to the confederate's intimacy level in terms of both descriptive and evaluative intimacy. Responsiveness then appeared most pronounced when being liked by another was one's interaction goal. This suggests that subjects are well aware of the beneficial effects responsiveness can have on attraction.

Characteristics of the Respondent

We noted previously that responsiveness is expected to vary according to the personal characteristics of the respondent. Davis (1982) notes several personality variables that are likely to influence the degree to which a person will be responsive to the communications of others. Among these are self-monitoring, self-consciousness, and introversion–extroversion. Because public self-consciousness may reduce the amount of attention one gives to the nonevaluative behaviors of the other, and may increase attention to the other's evaluative responses, Davis feels unable to make a clear-cut prediction. Although, the publicly self-conscious individual may be more responsive in order to enhance attractiveness to others, he or she may not attend sufficiently to the nonevaluative behaviors of the other in order to respond adequately. Davis suggests that predictions for private self-consciousness are more straightforward. Individuals who tend to focus largely on their own inner thoughts and feelings may attend less to the behaviors of others, thereby reducing their ability to address others' behaviors adequately.

Davis applies a similar line of reasoning to understanding the probable effects of self-monitoring on responsiveness. She notes that if the primary effect of a tendency to self-monitor is to increase the amount of attention paid to another's behavior so that appropriate responses can be selected, then self-monitoring should lead to increases in responsiveness. In terms of extroversion–introversion, she notes that extroverts are more likely to attend closely to the others' behaviors. Because they have been more attentive, they are more apt to be responsive. Recently, individual differences in responsiveness have been ad-
addressed more directly (Miller et al., 1983), using the Opener scale described earlier (see pages 27–28). There we reported that persons scoring high on the Opener scale were more likely to be the recipients of another's self-disclosure. One explanation proposed for this finding was that high Openers are more responsive to their partners and that this greater responsiveness seems to elicit more disclosure. Purvis et al. (in press) found that subjective judgments by an independent rater of "involvement indicated that high Openers were more involved with and attentive to their partners than were low Openers." Recently, Miller (1982) conceptually replicated this effect. Individuals who were both low Openers and low Disclosers were less responsive than individuals who were high on at least one of these dimensions. If high Openers are more attentive behaviorally to their partners, are they also more attentive to what their partners are actually saying? Are high Openers better at remembering conversations with their partners? In addition, are high Openers more accurate in interpreting the meaning of interpersonal communications? Currently, the authors are involved in addressing these issues in their research.

Relational Responsiveness

Relational responsiveness refers to a second general class of responsive behaviors involving the attainment and distribution of resources through which a person demonstrates that he or she is taking another's outcomes, needs, or wishes into consideration. The expression of relational responsiveness is expected to change during the course of a relationship, as the nature of the relationship itself changes (e.g., moves from an exchange to a communal relationship, Clark & Mills, 1979). For example, in a recent study by Berg (in press), as time progressed in a relationship between previously unacquainted roommates, the rules of exchange shifted. Early in the year, there was a significant positive correlation between the total number of benefits roommates reported receiving from each other. This correlation disappeared when roommates were tested again in the spring. However, what was present in the spring, but absent in the fall was a significant correlation between the number of most helpful or needed resources which roommates reported receiving. Several possible explanations for these results were discussed but the one which appeared most plausible was that the nature of the relationship between roommates shifted from an exchange relationship (based on equity) to a communal relationship (based on meeting the needs of the partner) over the course of the year.

The concept of relational responsiveness is similar to what Kelley (1979)
meant when he suggested that participants in relationships were responsive to the other’s outcomes. Kelley postulates a person’s behavior will be determined by both the outcomes he or she would receive and those received by the partner. Kelley also expects an increase in the tendency to take another’s outcomes into account as participants become more interdependent. The crucial variable here may be the amount of time participants have spent in a relationship and the existence of some form of prior interaction with the other (rather than the nature of that prior interaction). This view is consistent with the finding of Harrison and McClintock (1965) that dyads that had experienced either a prior success or a prior failure were more cooperative in an experimental game than dyads with no such experience. In addition, McClintock and McNeel (1967) and McClintock, Nuttin, and McNeel (1970) demonstrated that competition would be reduced and cooperation facilitated when playing with either a liked or disliked other as compared to a stranger. Finally, the idea that the crucial variable is prior experience rather than the nature of that experience is supported by the finding of Berg (in press) that the number of desired resources subjects received from a roommate increased over time and that this effect was independent of subjects’ plans to continue living with that roommate for another year.

Facets of Responsiveness

As described earlier, responsiveness can be manifested in at least three ways. The first of these ways involves style; not what individuals do but how they do it. For example, in terms of conversational responsiveness, style would involve not what one says (i.e., "I love you") but how one says those words (i.e., with sincerity and depth or as one might say "this orange looks moldy"). Presumably, the first response would be more responsive than the second. For relational responsiveness this would include how individuals provide a benefit to another. Individuals may decide to provide another with a benefit that meets that other’s needs, desires, and goals but may deliver the benefit begrudgingly rather than with a great deal of enthusiasm and delight. The recipient is apt to view this behavior as unresponsive rather than highly responsive. One’s style of expression is an interaction may, of course, be a function of one’s personality (i.e., activity level, general enthusiasm, excitability, and warmth), the nature of the situation (who one is interacting with and the context he or she is in) or a combination of these factors.

The timing of individuals’ responses may also have a dramatic impact on perceived responsiveness. In conversations, if Sally pauses too long before saying "uh-hum" the other may think she is daydreaming and
not really paying attention (or being responsive). Or if Sally responds to a topic that the other discussed an hour ago (but is no longer discussing), Sally’s “timing” will be off and her response will probably not be considered as responsive as it might have been if it had occurred immediately after her partner’s topic-related comment. In relational responsiveness, timing may also be critical to perceptions of responsiveness. For example, if I write to a friend and he or she does not respond for six months, this will negatively affect my perception of my friend’s responsiveness. Unfortunately, we are aware of virtually no direct research that assesses either the role of timing or the role of style on perceptions of responsiveness in interpersonal relations.

A third aspect of responsiveness involves what individuals do in their interactions with the other and the goals that those individuals have while engaging in a specific behavior. As such, it involves two components, the content of the behavior and the goal of the behavior. Let us consider the content of the behavior first. It is this mode of responsiveness that Davis (1982) seems to be referring to when she defines responsiveness as a response that addresses the content of the other’s preceding communication and is of an appropriate degree of elaboration. Most of the research on responsiveness to date has focused on this aspect of responsiveness. As mentioned earlier, this type of responsiveness has been shown to have a positive effect on interactions (Berg & Archer, 1980, in press; Davis & Perkowski, 1979). In addition to the content, this third mode of responsiveness involves one’s interaction goal. Such goals can affect the form of responsiveness that is demonstrated in an exchange (Berg & Archer, 1982). One such goal in interactions involves meeting social norms. In terms of conversational responsiveness this would involve, for example, responding to the disclosure of the other by disclosing in kind about a similar topic. A second goal of conversational responsiveness involves providing benefits that specifically meet the needs of the other. The work by Berg and Archer (1980) suggests that if a friend reveals she’s contemplating a divorce, she would probably consider the woman who offers support and listens to her better at meeting her needs (i.e., more responsive) than the woman who tells her the gory details of her own divorce. Regarding relational responsiveness, in providing a benefit for another, one can focus on social norms of exchange or one can provide a benefit the other really needs.

What then is the overlap between the concept of selectivity and the concept of responsiveness? Selectivity can be viewed as a small subset of responsiveness. When we are talking about choosing a benefit to meet the needs of the other we are talking about selectivity or one aspect of
responsiveness in which the goal is to meet the needs of the other (more selective behaviors would be considered more responsive). This view of responsiveness suggests that responsive behaviors have multiple components and that researchers have just begun to explore some of these facets to determine which behaviors by what individuals under which circumstances are perceived to be responsive. Future research needs to be done to determine not only the role of each facet in predicting perceived responsiveness (for both actors and observers) but in predicting how various facets of responsiveness affect one another. For example, if we wait too long to say "uh-hum," that will be viewed as less responsive. But, if we wait an unusually long time after someone has spoken and then say something highly selective does that compensate for the long time gap? What if we choose a highly selective gift for someone and in delivering it we show no affective expression (e.g., no enthusiasm) or even seem distressed? How does that affect perceptions of responsiveness?

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the role that selectivity and urgency play in interpersonal exchanges. Selectivity refers to the degree that a benefit is needed or desired by the recipient of that benefit while urgency refers to the desire of an individual to provide another with a benefit and conclude an exchange quickly. In general, selectivity and urgency will be inversely related to one another. The less time a person has in which to provide another with a benefit, the less likely he or she will be to provide a selective benefit.

In addition to being affected by the time frame allowed for the exchange, selectivity in providing benefits will be influenced by one's knowledge of a potential recipient, the attributions made for past benefits that have been received, and social norms such as equity and reciprocity. All of these factors as well as the balance between selectivity and urgency will be affected by the nature and the stage of the relationship between exchange partners. Those in closer and/or more long-term relationships are expected to feel less urgency to return a benefit after having received one and to provide more selective benefits.

The role of several personality factors that may enhance a sense of urgency or a desire to be more selective in choosing benefits for another were discussed. The concepts of selectivity and urgency were also related to other concepts in social exchange. In general, it appears that the
ideas of selectivity and urgency have run through a considerable amount of past theorizing and research but have never been addressed explicitly before. We have attempted to provide this type of discussion, while indicating the importance of considering the concepts of selectivity and urgency for a more complete understanding of the exchange process in both close and casual relationships. It is hoped that such a discussion will lead to more explicit future investigations of these issues.

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