

In social psychology, an interpersonal relationship denotes a series of interactions in time, each affected by past episodes in turn influencing future interactions. Both the opinions of others and human interactions fashion behavior and self-perception. Social psychologists define a close relationship as "one of strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time" (Kelley et al., 1983). Hinde (1976) further argues that in any relationship the two participants are interdependent, with the behavior of each influencing the other.

All relationships therefore share this idea of interdependence, however the closer the relationship the higher level of interdependence. In a close relationship, each one is exposed to the other person's life and inner world. Through self-disclosure and extensive interactions, each person involved in a close relationship apprehends the reasons behind the other person's preferences and behaviors, and influences the other person's behavior. Thus mental representation of self and other intertwine, and partners becoming cognitively interdependent.

As posited by Object Relations Theory, the complex relationship of self to other emerges from the earliest interactions. The theory indeed holds that the experiences with the primary caregivers in infancy shape a person's relationships with others and situations during adulthood. In all interactions with the significant parental figures, the infant, and later the child, internalizes inner and subjective representations of the relationship between the self and others are in the form of internal objects. These internal objects then become part of the person's psyche, and significantly influence interpersonal relationships later in life (Kernberg, 1995). The process of exchange in turn causes one or both participants in a relationship to feel comfortable and content, or conversely to feel injustice (Sprecher, 1986) when a perceived inequity influences the participants' feelings about the relationship, each other and themselves. The Equity Theory proposes that "when individuals find themselves participating in inequitable relationships, they will become distressed. The more

inequitable the relationship, the more distress they will feel" (Walster, Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Empirical data from research that test this proposition have confirmed that men and women who feel either under-benefited or over-benefited feel more distress than those who feel equitably treated (Sprecher, 1986).

For centuries human beings have tried to grasp the complexity of interpersonal relationships through the lens of literature. Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner*¹ offers an example of complex relational interactions. It is a novel that tells the story of Amir, an Afghan writer who lives in the United States in the year 2001. After receiving a phone call from Rahim Khan, an old acquaintance, Amir's first-person narrative jumps back in time to the 1970s to his childhood growing up as the son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul. Amir's relationships with the important figures of his early life form his identity, actions and choices. His influential poignant relationship with his father, along with all his ties with the other characters creates an intricate web of interdependent actions that ultimately lead to a sense of remorse and guilt that torments his conscience long after the world of his childhood has faded. These feelings eventually drive Amir's quest for atonement through self-sacrifice. Secured mainly through his Baba and relationship to Hassan, his personal journey to atonement encapsulates racism, institutional violence, the Soviet invasion to Kabul, and the Taliban's takeover. As such, it stands as testament to the strength of the human spirit and the underlying importance of maintaining strong personal relationships in the face of terror.

¹ All quotations from the novel refers to its Riverhead 2003 edition; further cited within the text as KR.