

The Important Role of Dynamic Relationship Orientation in
Interpersonal Relationships

LI, Tianyuan

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Thesis/Assessment Committee

Professor Catherine Alexandra McBride (Chair)

Professor Helene Hoi Lam Fung (Thesis Supervisor)

Professor Qian Wang (Committee Member)

Professor Frieder R. Lang (External Examiner)

Professor Samuel Mun-yin Ho (External Examiner)

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Abstract

Previous studies have identified that people have two relationship orientations in interpersonal relationships. Communal orientation is about being altruistic and helping others without expecting a reward. Exchange orientation is about keeping equity and fairness in interpersonal relationships. Both relationship orientations are prevalently observed in human societies and are evolutionarily adaptive for the survival of human species. Thus, I propose that communal orientation and exchange orientation can be viewed as two relationship modules that coexist in everyone's mind. Each relationship module is associated with corresponding mental networks that can be dynamically activated across different situations. The activation of certain dynamic relationship orientation would then influence the dynamics within the relationship. To test the important role of dynamic relationship orientation in interpersonal relationships, a 14-day daily diary study was conducted. The participants were 103 college students who were involved in a serious romantic relationship. They were asked to fill out a daily questionnaire everyday for 14 consecutive days. Each daily questionnaire recorded participants' perceived stress level and details about their relationship with mother and romantic partner. For each relationship, I measured the activation of dynamic relationship

orientation, relationship satisfaction, mutual responsiveness, support exchanges, negative exchanges, and interaction duration on that day. Participants' self-construal and background information were also measured in a pretest questionnaire. Results from the study supported the dynamic relationship orientation perspective. First, dynamic relationship orientation mediated the effect of perceived stress on relationship satisfaction. Higher perceived stress led to relatively less activation of the communal orientation and then resulted in lower relationship satisfaction. Second, the association between perceived stress and dynamic relationship orientation was moderated by relationship type and self-construal. The dynamic relationship orientation in child-mother relationship was less responsive to perceived stress compared with that in romantic relationship. Similarly, the dynamic relationship orientation of people with high interdependent/low independent self-construal was less responsive to perceived stress compared with that of people with low interdependent/high independent self-construal. Lastly, the effect of dynamic relationship orientation on relationship satisfaction in romantic relationship was mediated by mutual responsiveness, support exchanges, and negative exchanges, whereas the same effect in child-mother relationship was only mediated by mutual responsiveness and negative exchanges. The results suggest that dynamic relationship orientation is a key construct that connects relationship dynamics with situational factors and individual dispositions. The concept of dynamic relationship orientation can successfully integrate previous theories and empirical findings regarding interpersonal relationships and inspire a new research direction.

Keywords: dynamic relationship orientation, stress, relationship satisfaction, child-mother relationship, romantic relationship

動態關係取向在人際關係中的重要作用

摘 要

以往的研究發現在人際關係中存在兩種關係取向。共同取向與利他行為以及不求回報地幫助他人相關。交換取向則與保持人際關係的平等和公平相關。兩種關係取向在人類社會中都很常見，並且從進化的角度來說都有利於人類種族的生存。因此，我認為共同取向和交換取向可以被看作兩種同時存在於人們腦中的關係圖式，每種關係圖式都與一些能在不同的環境中被動態激活的神經模塊相關，而某種動態關係取向的激活會進而影響人際關係中的動態互動情況。為了驗證動態關係取向在人際關係中的重要作用，我完成了一個十四天的日記式實驗。參與實驗的是一百零三名處於戀愛關係中的大學生。他們需要連續十四天每天完成一份問卷。每天的問卷記錄了每位參與者當天感受到的壓力以及他們與母親和戀人互動的細節。針對每一種關係，我測量了當天動態關係取向的激活、關係滿意度、互相響應度、支持交換、負面交換、以及互動時間。在實驗前問卷中也記錄了參與者的自我構念和背景信息。研究結果支持了動態關係取向的看法。首先，動態關係取向中介了壓力對關係滿意度的影響。較高的壓力會引起共同取向的較低激活，繼而導致較低的關係滿意度。其次，壓力與動態關係取向的關係被人際關係的類型以及自我構念所調節。在子女與母親的關係中的動態關係取向對壓力的反應不如在戀愛關係中的動態關係取向靈敏。同樣的，互聯型自我構念強/獨立型自我構念弱的人的動態關係取向對壓力的反應不如互聯型自我構念弱/獨立型自我構念強的人的動態關係取向靈敏。最後，在戀愛關係中，動態關係取向對關係滿意度的作用被互相響應度、支持交換、以及負面交換中介；在子女與母親的關係中，動態關係取向對關係

滿意度的作用只被互相響應度同負面交換中介。研究結果說明動態關係取向是
聯係人際關係、環境因素、以及個體特性的重要概念。這個概念可以成功地整
合以往關於人際關係的理論同實證研究，也開啟了一個新的研究方向。

關鍵詞：動態關係取向、壓力、關係滿意度、子女與母親的關係、戀愛關係