

This study examined how implicit motive dispositions could affect cognition of social relationships. According to the Relational Models Theory, there are four modes of social relationship, namely, communal sharing (CS), authority ranking (AR), equality matching (EM) and market pricing (MP). We hypothesized power motive to be related to authority ranking (AR), intimacy or affiliation motive to communal sharing (CS) and achievement motive to market pricing. The implicit motives and relationship cognition styles were assessed with the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) procedure, and the Mode of Relationship Questionnaire (MORQ) respectively. Additionally, we used different role dyads including both complex (mother, a close opposite sex friend) and simple (classmate, project member, high school teacher and health care professional) relationships in accessing the relational styles and hypothesized that the strength of relationship between implicit motives and relational models for complex relationships would be greater than that for less complex relationships.

Our analysis revealed that the relational models were systematically related such that communal sharing (CS) was associated with equality matching (EM) for all six dyads, equality matching (EM) with market pricing (MP) for four dyads and authority ranking (AR) with market pricing (MP) for three dyads. Thus the relational models were

simplified into three dimensions labeled “communal” for (CS and EM), “democratic” for (EM and MP) and “hierarchical” for (AR and MP) by grouping relational styles with high correlations. Several unexpected linkages between implicit motives and these dimensions were found. Power motive was negatively correlated with “communal” for the relation with a close opposite sex friend. Regarding achievement motive, it was positively correlated with both “communal” and “democratic” for the mother dyad as well as “hierarchical” for the high school teacher dyad. Also, intimacy motive was positively correlated with “democratic” for the mother dyad.

On the other hand, we did confirm the second hypothesis that implicit motives only affected the use of relational models for more complex relationships, where there was greater flexibility in implementation of relational rules. Suggestions on assessing the relational models in a more implicit manner for future studies were also offered.